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ABSTRACT

Recognizing the failure of American schools to educate Hispanic and other minority students, educators are searching for new strategies and discovering the powerful role that parents can play in advancing educational goals. A growing body of evidence supports the belief that involving parents in their children's education works in the best interests of students, schools, and parents themselves. However, despite recent legislative support, few schools are involving parents in meaningful ways. Barriers that block collaboration between Hispanic parents and school personnel include work interference, low parent self-confidence, limited English proficiency, cultural differences, and teacher and administrator attitudes. Parent involvement encompasses a variety of patterns focused on home, school, or community. Successful school interventions to promote parent involvement include strategies that are social, informational, educational, supportive of the home, or leadership oriented. Appropriate training helps both teachers and parents establish an effective home-school communication network. Such programs train teachers to train parents and to learn from parents, and provide parents with an awareness of school practices and resources and the skills to support student learning at home. A successful four-way collaboration among Hispanic parents, university trainers, local businesses, and school district personnel is described that demonstrates ways to promote community support. An appendix outlines a model of integrated parent and teacher training within an inservice curriculum. Contains 129 references. (SV)

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Andrea B. Bermúdez

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Doing Our Homework

How Schools Can Engage Hispanic Communities

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How Schools Can Engage Hispanic Communities

by
Andrea B. Bermúdez

ERIC
Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools

ERIC

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To my extended family, Charlie, Buster, Lynn, and Ann, with great appreciation of your love and support.

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CHAPTER 1

The Importance of Involving Hispanic Parents

This chapter examines the impact of parent involvement on students, schools, and parents themselves. It also examines the importance of parent involvement beyond elementary school.

In too many places, classrooms have become battlegrounds of competing value systems, learning styles, languages, and attitudes about ethnicity. The casualties have been Hispanic and other minority students who leave school before graduating. Consider these facts:

- Fifty-six percent of Hispanics living in the U.S. are functionally illiterate (Levin, 1987).
- One in four Hispanic students is not expected to graduate from high school as compared to one in ten Anglo students (Barufaldi, 1990).
- According to the 1990 U.S. Census, approximately 6.3 million limited-English-proficient students are currently enrolled in our public schools. This figure indicates a 38.4 percent increase from 1980 (Waggoner, 1993).

These facts have implications for the future occupational and economic opportunities that will be open to Hispanic people.

Although it has been a long time coming, educators have finally taken notice of increases in the population of Hispanic students and the failure of American schools to educate them. As they look for new strategies, one thing they are discovering is the powerful role that parents can play in advancing educational goals.

This chapter summarizes the growing body of evidence to support the belief that involving parents in the education of their children works in the best interest of students, schools, and parents themselves. The discussion begins with a description of benefits to students in the following areas:

a. student academic achievement (Gray & Klaus, 1970; Henderson, 1989; Klaus & Gray, 1968; Schaefer, 1972; Walberg, 1984);

b. language achievement (Bermúdez & Padrón, 1989, 1990; Henderson & García, 1973; Lindholm, 1987);

c. overall school behavior (Levenstein, 1974; Weikart, 1973);

d. attitudes and interest in science among adolescents (Kremer & Walberg, 1981); and

e. cognitive growth (Irvine, 1979; Radin, 1969, 1972).

From there the focus will shift to the benefits for parents in the areas of self-confidence and parenting expertise (Bennett, 1986); relationships with the schools their children attend (Bermúdez & Padrón, 1987a, 1988; Herman & Yeh, 1980; Met, 1987; Morgan, 1982); and relationships with their children (Henderson, 1989). Finally, we will look at the rationale for extending efforts to involve parents past elementary into secondary schooling.

How Students Benefit from Parent Involvement

The direct benefits to students of active parent involvement are numerous. Here is what research has shown:

Student academic achievement. Student achievement can be improved by parent involvement in the home and in the school. Creating a supportive learning environment at home—one in which parents encourage positive attitudes toward schooling and have high expectations for their children's achievement—raises student achievement. Becher (1984) identified key family traits as having a positive impact: high expectations, frequent interactions between parent and child, tutoring, role modeling, and parental reinforcement of school learning. In another study, researchers found that high school students' career aspirations are dependent upon their parents' expectations and occupational level (Schlamberg & Chun, 1986). Unfortunately, many low-income limited-English-proficient (LEP) parents perceive their role in their children's education as *less* important than that of the school's (Carrasquillo & Carrasquillo, 1979).

In addition, studies addressing parent-child relationships have concluded that training parents in home learning strategies helps children at risk of failing in school "to outperform their friends for years" (Henderson, 1989, pp. 3-4). Other studies of student dropouts

have cited low parental expectations and support as major causes for former students' decisions to leave school (Barber & McClellan, 1987).

In addition to their actions in the home, parents' interactions with the school are also important. Phillips, Smith, and Witte (1985) investigated 22 school districts in metropolitan Milwaukee and consistently found that parent involvement, regardless of family income, grade level, or location, was associated with student academic performance. They reported that schools having higher student academic performance had more active parent organizations, higher volunteerism, and a high number of positive interactions between home and school.

Student academic success is sustained when parents remain involved (Gray & Klaus, 1970). Programs for involving parents that are well planned, comprehensive, and long-lasting show strength in maintaining student academic success (Gordon, 1978).

Language achievement. The academic failure of many LEP students has been blamed partly on their inability to understand the language of the classroom (Valverde, 1984). As stated at the beginning of this chapter, the number of LEP students continues to escalate.

Home and neighborhood play an integral part in either promoting or deterring the language acquisition process. This statement is not meant to imply that the home needs to switch language mediums. In fact, the opposite is true: A well-developed home language experience is a strong foundation for second language acquisition (Cummins, 1981, 1993). This means that parents who read to and talk with their children in their home language help their children develop language skills in ways that will facilitate their learning of English.

A note on the cultural significance of increasing the parent-child dialogue in linguistically diverse homes: For many of these children, the process of acculturating to the school setting can mean an irreversible separation from home values and mores. When this happens, children are cut off from developing a crucial aspect of their identities. Strong parent-child dialogue in the home language can lead to children seeing themselves as cherished members of a cultural community within the mainstream society.

School behavior and attendance. Behavior discipline is a culturally shaped concept. Each group defines behavioral limits according to a value system agreed upon and generally favored by that group.

When schools and homes work together to set behavior guidelines, students are not caught in the middle of confusing double messages. Involving parents in monitoring school behavior is one way schools have collaborated with parents to successfully combat violence and drugs.

Low attendance is usually a strong warning signal that a student is at risk of eventually dropping out of school. Informing parents of their children's truant behavior often serves to draw parents into the effort to keep a child in school.

Science and mathematics achievement. The absence of women and minorities in financially rewarding careers related to science and mathematics is evident in studies of unemployment, underutilization, and salaries (Task Force on Women, Minorities, and the Handicapped in Science and Technology, 1988). Parents play a key role in helping their children form ideas about what is possible for their futures. In fact, according to the task force report, "...parent expectations are strongly associated with children's participation in science-related activities" (p. 49). Too often, low-income minority parents do not, themselves, expect their sons and daughters to pursue careers in fields related to science and mathematics, fields that they may associate only with white, male, middle-class individuals.

Tracking low-income minority LEP students into nonacademic programs has become the norm, diminishing their access to many opportunities. According to Oakes (1990), low-income LEP students in nonacademic tracks lack (a) exposure to the college preparatory curriculum, (b) parental or school adults' high expectations for their career choices, (c) academic orientation of peers, (d) perceived future relevance of academic subjects to career goals, and (e) confidence in their abilities in these areas. Parent education programs can increase parents' knowledge about their roles in their children's aspirations, including their influence on their sons' and daughters' career choices, and on their children's pursuit of scholarships and financial aid available to minority students.

Children's cognitive growth. Irvine (1979) examined reasoning, verbal concepts, and school-related skills (controlling for other factors such as income and education) and found that measures of these abilities improve significantly in low-income preschool children when parents participate in their schooling. Parent participation in this study included hours devoted by parents to helping their children during the school year, contact with school personnel during home

visits, parents visiting the school and attending meetings, and incidental contact.

In addition, Radin (1969) found that high IQ kindergarten children in an enrichment program demonstrated significant cognitive gains as a result of their mothers' teaching them at home. The mothers received training in the use of home teaching materials to reinforce classroom learning. Replicating the study with low IQ preschoolers, Radin (1972) found similar positive results.

How Parents Benefit from Involvement

Getting parents to participate—even at a minimal level—helps overcome many parents' initial feelings of anxiety about becoming involved in school activities or acting as an advocate for their children in the educational system. Often, this apprehensiveness arises from feelings of low self-worth or alienation from a system they do not readily understand (Petersen & Warnsby, 1992). Additionally, Hispanic parents often have so much respect for the teacher that they will blame themselves for their children's problems in school rather than blame the teacher, the school, or the academic program (Carrasquillo & Carrasquillo, 1979).

When parents lack knowledge about beneficial programs that their children could take part in, their role as advocate is undermined. For instance, in Texas during the 1993-94 school year, there were well over 40,000 parent refusals for special services that were tailored to meet the students' needs (Texas Education Agency, 1994). Lack of parent ownership of these programs may be at the heart of such a situation, and parents will not feel their ownership until they are drawn into the process and fully informed.

Dauber and Epstein (1993) found that parents *want* to know more about how to help their children learn. Therefore, helping parents gain knowledge and expertise in how to assist their children with schoolwork and to take advantage of opportunities available to them allows parents to be more effective in supporting their children's learning. This empowerment leads to increased self-confidence and a better sense of their own authority as equal partners in the education of their children.

Parent Involvement in Secondary Education

While the need for continuity between home and school increases during middle school and high school years, parents tend to become

less confident that they can help their children at home. During this critical time, youngsters begin to separate themselves from the home, often looking to peers for role models. This situation can be especially threatening for homes whose language and culture are different from the mainstream. In these homes, the natural act of growing up can become a total disengagement from the foundations of that child's heritage.

All too often parents relinquish the mentoring of high schoolers to the teachers and administrators. According to Powell, Farrar, and Cohen (1985), parents have passed on the responsibility to socialize their adolescents and have given up curricular decisions to the youngsters themselves. Helping students at home with their schoolwork is more infrequent as parents feel they are not prepared to help their children. There is hardly any school guidance beyond the elementary grades for parents who want to assist their children in learning (Dauber & Epstein, 1993).

For many parents, the feelings go beyond insecurity about their ability to help their young with schoolwork in the upper grades to negativity about their roles. Schools often reinforce this negativism by contacting parents only when their children are doing poorly or misbehaving (Moles, 1987). A destructive cycle is created that tends to foster parental reluctance to become involved.

This is very unfortunate considering the possible positive impact these parents could be having on their sons' and daughters' achievement. One study identified parent and community involvement as *the key factor* in students' high school achievement and career aspirations (McDill, Rigsby, & Meyers, 1969). Despite its importance, studies show that parent participation dwindles after the primary grades (Epstein, 1984; Lucas & Lusthaus, 1978). Schools' efforts also diminish after the primary grades. Elementary schools' initiatives to involve parents tend to be more positive and comprehensive than secondary schools'. In a recent study, actively participating parents reported that teachers at the elementary school level took more initiative to involve them (Dauber & Epstein, 1993).

Even the mechanisms that commonly do exist in secondary schools tend to be used ineffectively. Parent-teacher conferences are one example. Although there is potential for such conferences to be effective, generally they merely become a one-way vehicle for transmitting information from teacher to parent with little, if any, impact on long-range activities or follow-up (Tangri & Leitch, 1982).

Research has shown in study after study the long-term impact of parents' role as mentors in their children's lives, and the impact of home dynamics on achievement. However, parents and educators continue to lack understanding of this role, which keeps parents from pursuing a collaborative role in the upper grades.

Now that the rationale for educational involvement of Hispanic parents at all grade levels has been established, this book will provide a historical perspective for understanding how parents became disengaged in the first place.

Highlights of Chapter 1

The purpose of this chapter was to provide a rationale for parental involvement of Hispanics across all grade levels, particularly those with limited English proficiency. The chapter included the following summary points:

- Involving families in schools has become a major goal of professionals, particularly those working with at-risk students. Establishing a collaborative relationship with the families of these children is essential in assessing and planning interventions.
- Studies show that parent involvement in the education of their children works in the best interest of students, schools, and parents themselves.
- Benefits for students include (a) improved student academic achievement, (b) increased language achievement, (c) improved overall school behavior and attendance, (d) sustained achievement gains, (e) improved attitudes and interest in science among adolescents, and (f) increased cognitive growth.
- Additionally, through involvement in their children's education, parents gain (a) self-confidence and expertise, (b) skills and attitudes to improve home-school relations, and (c) improved relationships with their children.
- With these benefits assured, schools can more successfully perform their role of educating all students.
- In spite of the importance of parental involvement in students' academic success and career aspirations, parental participation diminishes as children grow older.
- This unfortunate situation may be due to the fact that parent involvement is directly related to the nature and scope of pro-

grams and practices; and these are stronger, more positive, and more comprehensive at the elementary level than in the higher grades.

- Students need connectedness within their homes, schools, and communities in order to develop a strong identity and a sense of responsibility for their futures. Three important interactions facilitate academic success: (a) parent-child, (b) home-school, and (c) home-school-community partnerships.

CHAPTER 2

Hispanic Parent Involvement: An Evolving Construct

This chapter briefly describes historical changes in philosophy related to parent involvement in schools. It also describes various broad categories of Hispanic parents, including sketches of the dilemmas each category generally faces. The chapter then takes a first brief look at ways schools can take those dilemmas into account as they search for better ways to work in partnership with parents.

Recognizing the need for parent involvement in education has taken time and has been affected by conditions in the larger society. Perhaps a brief look backward will help us grasp how we have arrived at the understandings we now have.

Historical Changes in Parent Involvement

In colonial times, when homes served as classrooms, families were the source of continuity as the various immigrant groups arrived and went about the business of settling in the new environment. Parental authority was upheld by law in all 13 colonies. Education in the Puritan north, for example, was geared toward spiritual salvation, entrusting homes with the spiritual and moral development of children. Likewise, middle and southern colonies experienced the same strong familial influence on education despite dramatically different religious views.

After the American Revolution, changes within the family structure placed more responsibilities on the mother as the center of home life. Childrearing literature of the time practically ignored fathers (Berger, 1981), whereas mother groups, called maternal associations, started organizing across the country for the purpose of developing methods to train children morally at home. As schools began to be organized during the late 1800s, however, some aspects of education were relegated exclusively to the schools.

Family life and schooling took a dramatic turn at the end of the 19th century with the Industrial Revolution separating families from schools (Moles, 1993). Public schooling gained prominence as an institution of life in the U.S., businessmen gained top status, and the values and beliefs business represented became widely admired (Callahan, 1962). In fact, this was a period when great fortunes were accumulated (e.g., Andrew Carnegie, John D. Rockefeller, J. P. Morgan, Edward H. Harriman). Industry was organizing itself according to the principles of scientific management, which involved the use of "experts" to engineer the efficient use of labor. Soon principles of efficiency and deference to expertise were applied in many other areas of societal organization, including the schools.

Other powerful social forces were at work at the beginning of the 20th century. The last of the Indian wars had been fought, slavery had been abolished, Mexicans from north of the Rio Grande became Mexican-Americans by virtue of war, and tremendous numbers of immigrants were arriving each day. Schools were called upon to "Americanize" the children of these various groups—to replace traditional folkways and languages with mainstream ways and English literacy, and to acquaint students with the immense variety of knowledge that no longer could be passed on readily from one generation to another in the home (Graham, 1974).

Schools, in their efforts to control ethnic diversity, adopted increasingly bureaucratic organizational structures, while governments passed legislation to segregate the various racial and ethnic populations. Family became the unit of survival for minority ethnics; during this same period, Anglo-Americans initiated the Parent Education Movement to readdress the role of the home in education. The spirit of the times emphasized a dichotomous relationship between homes and schools. Parents were viewed as agents of service to the schools rather than partners with the schools in educating the children. Common parent activities of the early 20th century focused on sanitation, school beautification, fund-raising, vaccination, and nutrition.

This pattern continued until the civil rights movement and subsequent Great Society programs of the 1960s. "Helping people to help themselves" was the guiding philosophy of programs implemented during the 1960s. This meant acknowledging the importance of local community and parent participation in community development and educational efforts, and creating legal structures to ensure that

participation. Many programs requiring parent involvement were created during this time and continue to this day, including Title I (Chapter I), the Bilingual Education Act (Title VII), Head Start, and migrant and special education programs.

Chapter I funding, for example, has encouraged the involvement of parents in education in significant ways, including (a) requiring frequent parent conferences; (b) providing resource centers, training, and hiring parent liaisons in the school; (c) providing frequent information regarding children's progress; (d) training school personnel to work with parents, coordinate parent activities, and make home contacts; (e) using parents as classroom volunteers, tutors, and aides; (f) providing assistance in implementing home-based instruction, including a school-to-home complementary curriculum and materials; (g) providing information on the Chapter I program and soliciting suggestions from parents; and (h) establishing active parent advisory councils. D'Angelo and Adler (1991) see Chapter I as a "catalyst for improving parent involvement" and state that "many Chapter I programs have been thoughtfully analyzing the range of parents' interests, energies, ideas, needs, cultures, languages and lifestyles that are represented in the schools and communities in order to design activities and programs that will draw parents into the education of their children" (p. 350).

In addition to legislation created by Congress, U.S. Supreme Court decisions established precedents for furthering partnerships between homes and schools. For instance, the *Lau vs. Nichols* decision of 1974 recognized the need to connect homes and schools by upholding the equal educational rights of non-English-speaking students and their families (Epstein, 1986).

However, despite such legal mechanisms, few schools have succeeded in involving parents in meaningful ways. As Nardine and Morris (1991) assert:

> Unfortunately, much of the existing state legislation amounts to little more than lip service paid to the widely accepted idea that parents play a critical role in a child's education. Only in a few exceptional cases does state law come with significant funds and personnel (p. 366).

Without this kind of financial support, schools find it difficult to implement long-term programs to involve parents.

What is a "Parent"? What is "Involvement"?

Through the years, the role of parents in education has changed in response to social and economic pressures. So, too, has the makeup of families changed. Children in the schools today come from a variety of circumstances. Hispanic families, like other American families, vary in their composition and might include two parents, a single parent, cohabiting adults, and a variety of blended arrangements (e.g., widowed mother and divorced stepfather, etc.). In addition, extended family members commonly help take care of children in Hispanic families. These variations call for a broader definition of who the "parent" is in parent involvement.

Just as there is not one standard definition for a typical home environment, there could not be one set of principles and activities designed to cater to all home audiences. Survival priorities keep many low-income and single parents from accessing the schools. Frequently these same parents have had negative experiences with schools that translate into feelings of insecurity, hopelessness, and alienation when dealing with school personnel (Petersen & Warnsby, 1992). Since four out of ten Hispanic children live in poverty, while only one in six Anglo children are poor (Bempechat & Ginsburg, 1989) it comes as no surprise that participation of Mexican-American parents, for example, in the schools is lower than that of Anglos (Maestas, 1981). In addition, negative attitudes held by school personnel toward Hispanic parents—or vice versa—can make the home-school dialogue unattainable.

Besides low socioeconomic status, other factors can affect the frequency and effectiveness of home-school interactions. Clark (1983) has concluded that cultural style—in interactions such as parent-child dialogue, parental encouragement of education, discipline, and nurturing—rather than family ethnicity or makeup has the greatest impact on student academic success. Still, it is important for schools to consider all these factors as they plan and implement parent involvement programs targeted for language-minority parents and caregivers.

So how *can* we think about parent involvement? According to Vandegrift and Greene (1992), an involved parent [caretaker] can be one who is either *supportive of* or *active in* school initiatives. They suggest that these two possibilities—supportive or actively involved—be placed on a continuum, and that parent engagement at *any* level be welcomed. Vandegrift and Greene say the initial contact is crucial

because once made, the likelihood of future participation increases. They suggest varied, nonthreatening, and low-commitment activities for parents to ensure broad parental support. However, they insist that aiming at active participation by all parents is an unrealistic goal because some parents are simply not willing to be "joiners."

Diversity Within the Hispanic Parent Community

The term "Hispanic" is used to describe a wide-ranging group of people originating in Spain, the Americas, and the Caribbean. Each of these Hispanic cultures has its own historical and geographical context depending on how each combined its European ancestry with indigenous and/or African influences. Music, art, literature, and linguistic expressions, for example, have different qualities in different Hispanic regions. Musical and linguistic sounds vary from African-influenced to American Indian-influenced themes and rhythms. In addition to the diversity that has developed among the various groups, variation is also found among individuals in terms of lifestyles and value systems.

In light of all of this variability, it may be helpful to think about Hispanic families as comprising several categories. The family's educational level is, according to Dornbusch (1986), the most important variable in predicting student academic success. Family income level also has been cited as a potential barrier for school involvement and student success (Petersen & Warnsby, 1992). In light of these findings, let's look at four broad categories of Hispanic families based on different combinations of educational level and income. Each of the categories poses somewhat different challenges to activity planners and may require special approaches.

High education/high socioeconomics. Though not necessarily the most involved, these parents have the means for facilitating children's achievement by providing achievement-oriented role models, home resources, and high expectations. They do not feel intimidated by school personnel or by the school system. They initiate activities such as reading books, using the library, guiding the use of television, and helping with extracurricular activities—all activities that have been shown to have a positive effect on student achievement (Gallagher, Schaeffer, Edgerton, & Lownan, 1976).

Low education/high socioeconomics. These parents often feel intimidated by the educational system and the personnel associated

with it (Petersen & Warnsby, 1992). Limited English proficiency further distances many of these parents from the schools. Although they are resourceful citizens, their lack of information about their role as home educators prevents them from actively participating in their children's educations. Comer (1986) also notes that less well-educated parents and parents with fewer mainstream social skills are often reluctant to become involved in school activities even when invited to participate.

High education/medium-low socioeconomics. These parents know what it takes to become educated; however, they may not be able to provide home resources, such as technology, to support their children's learning. These parents have high expectations for their children (Snow, 1982) and want to collaborate with the schools. However, these positive influences can be challenged by teacher-held biases against low-income minority parents (Tangri & Leitch, 1982).

Low education/low socioeconomics. Parents belonging in this category are the most disenfranchised. Learning to trust the schools is often difficult for them (Comer, 1986) because schools represent an unfamiliar culture that many feel has abandoned their children. For many, lack of English proficiency and understanding of the school's culture creates even stronger barriers to participation. It has been reported that parents with less than a high school education generally have very little contact with the schools (Harris, Kagay, & Ross, 1987). Their absence has been interpreted by many school personnel as being the result of apathy rather than school-related anxiety and negative perceptions of self-worth. Productive partnerships can be established best when parents develop a sense of their own important role and ownership of their children's education (Jackson & Cooper, 1992; Torres, 1988).

Engaging Hispanic parents in productive partnerships with the schools requires an awareness of what conditions—negative and positive—exist for each of the categories described and then looking for ways to collaborate within those conditions. These categories are not meant as a strict typology; instead they are meant to suggest how different factors can combine to pose different challenges for Hispanic parents and for the educators who are committed to working with them.

The next chapter provides greater detail about the dilemmas facing teachers and Hispanic parents and the consequent barriers that often jeopardize efforts to involve them in schools.

Highlights of Chapter 2

The purpose of this chapter was to provide a historical context from which to define constructs related to parental involvement, particularly as they apply to Hispanic parents; and to understand some of the variables affecting family structure, levels of parent involvement, and historical and social differences within the Hispanic population. The discussion included the following summary points:

- From colonial times (when homes served as classrooms) through the present, the role of parents in education has undergone dramatic changes.
- It was not until the 1960s, with the civil rights movement and the Great Society programs, that parental participation in education became acknowledged and legitimized in programming such as Title I (Chapter I), the Bilingual Education Act (Title VII), Head Start, and migrant and special education.
- Few schools have succeeded in addressing parent involvement effectively.
- Just as there is not one standard definition for a typical home environment, there could not be one set of principles and activities designed to cater to all home audiences.
- The term "Hispanic" encompasses great diversity in cultural and linguistic heritages. It also includes diversity in family educational and income levels.
- Engaging Hispanic parents in productive partnerships with the schools requires an awareness of the conditions that either enhance or deter collaboration for each of the various categories of parents (based on educational and income levels).
- Productive partnerships can be established between homes and schools only when parents develop a sense of ownership over their children's education.

CHAPTER 3

Barriers to Home-School Partnerships

> Programs that involve parents in the schools can play a major role in creating a desirable context for teaching and learning. However, there are obstacles in the way of parent participation in the schools. Many schools simply don't want parents present, and many parents are reluctant to become involved, as well. Some schools pay lip service to the importance of parent participation but don't give parents the opportunity to play a meaningful role in the life of the school (Comer, 1986).

What barriers block collaboration between Hispanic parents and school personnel? This chapter addresses this question, first with regard to impediments met by parents, and second with regard to teachers. Findings from a new study reveal current teacher attitudes towards minority parents and suggest ways to approach change.

Barriers Impeding Parents

Culturally and linguistically diverse families remain alienated from the school system due to a variety of barriers, including (a) work interference, (b) lack of confidence, (c) lack of English language skills, (d) lack of understanding of the home-school partnership, (e) lack of understanding of the school system, (f) negative past experiences with schools, and (g) insensitivity and hostility on the part of school personnel. How each of these barriers inhibits parents from participating in the schools, and brief suggestions for overcoming these barriers, are shared in the following discussion.

Work interference. Marital status and family size do not seem to have an effect on the extent of parental involvement in the schools. However, work interference remains an obstacle to school participation. Leitch and Tangri (1988) found that work was the major reason stated by parents for noninvolvement in school activities. In addition, parents have reported that when they have time to help their children on weekends, usually there is no schoolwork assigned (Dauber & Epstein, 1993).

The nine-to-five, Monday-through-Friday school activity schedule conflicts with many Hispanic families' work arrangements, childcare, and transportation needs. Studies (not limited to Hispanic populations) have shown that evening activities tend to draw working mothers in numbers equal to nonworking mothers (Epstein, 1984). In addition, late notice of meetings has been reported as a barrier for most parents, especially those who work late hours (Tangri & Leitch, 1982). Additional barriers are created when single-parent homes—which have become the rule more than the exception—are characterized as "broken homes," or when school activities including only fathers or mothers are planned (Clay, 1981).

These obstacles can be minimized by surveying parents for information about their work hours and adopting flexible schedules for parent involvement activities (Padrón & Bermúdez, 1986). Taking care with the terms used to describe families when speaking and writing prevents sending unintended negative messages about how school staff view families.

Self-confidence. Many Hispanic parents believe that education takes place only in the schools and that their participation is not essential. As a result, they separate themselves from the process (Comer, 1986). Parents who treat school personnel as superior or feel uncomfortable in the school setting are less likely to be involved than those who have developed a sense of equal partnership (Ritter, Mont-Reynaud, & Dornbusch, 1993). Carrasquillo and Carrasquillo (1979) have reported that bilingual parents often go to the extreme of blaming themselves when something goes wrong rather than place any blame on teachers. Unfortunately, this tendency creates an unnecessary gulf between homes and schools. Feeling alienated from the mainstream, some minority parents develop a negative self-perception, further preventing them from contacting school personnel (Petersen & Warnsby, 1992). These negative perceptions are often reinforced by schools that either overtly or covertly discourage parental participation.

Programs that incorporate a component for building self-esteem and confidence in the parents' abilities have been successful in reaching disengaged parents. By providing nonthreatening environments and offering low-commitment activities for the initial home-school gatherings, schools provide a stepping-stone to higher levels of self-confidence and involvement among low-income minority parents (Petersen & Warnsby, 1992).

Language skills. Inability to understand the language of the school is a major deterrent to the participation of LEP parents. Such parents find interactions with schools difficult and rarely make the attempt (Inger, 1992). A majority of Hispanic parents in one study reported language differences and negative attitudes directed toward them by school staff as factors that discourage involvement (Bauch, 1993). Other research has shown that parents of high school students want to help their children, but their inability to understand the language of the assignments has kept them from trying (Simich-Dudgeon, 1993).

Offering English-as-a-second-language (ESL) classes has worked effectively as a parental recruitment tool. Once the school becomes a familiar environment through program attendance, parents are more likely to become involved in other school activities (Bermúdez & Padrón, 1987a).

Cultural differences in viewing parents' role. Teaming with the school is not a tradition of the Hispanic cultures. Historically, most Hispanics have perceived education as the responsibility of the schools, viewing parental intervention as interference with what trained professionals are supposed to do (García, 1990).

However, research has shown that these attitudes and perceptions can change as a result of exposure to and participation in educational programs for parents (Bermúdez & Padrón, 1987b). Through exposure to school programs, parents develop greater confidence in their knowledge of how to help their children become successful in school (Bennett, 1986). Offering opportunities to enhance these skills assists parents and school personnel in feeling comfortable with their roles in the home-school partnership.

Knowledge of the school system. A great number of low-income Hispanic parents view schools as an incomprehensible system, controlled by individuals who wish to keep them in the dark. Lack of trust is often the result of misunderstanding the intentions of the other party. Sending home communications in English only and scheduling meetings at times when parents cannot attend serve to reinforce parental apprehension.

The lack of involvement that results from mistrust and apprehension is often perceived by school personnel as a lack of concern for the children's education (Inger, 1992). Often these parents are not apathetic or "hard to reach," they are simply in need of knowing more

about their role, rights, and responsibilities in the education of their children (Bermúdez & Padrón, 1987a). Clark (1983) reported that parents from low socioeconomic environments wished to be involved, but did not know they had the right to ask for anything special from their children's schools.

When parents do not understand how to access the school system, changes in practices that would be beneficial to the children will not take place. Training parents to work effectively within the system provides them the necessary knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to improve educational opportunities for their families.

Past experiences. Many non-English-speaking parents have had negative experiences of their own. Very likely, these parents have suffered racial and linguistic discrimination by the schools (García, 1990) that has made them become disenchanted with the system. Traumatic memories can linger through adulthood (Petersen & Warnby, 1992).

Negative feelings toward home-school interaction are often reinforced when schools communicate with parents only to share "bad news" about their children (Henderson, Marburger, & Ooms, 1986). Positive communication with parents, as well as opportunities to experience success in the interactions with the school (e.g., talking with, not at), often produce more active participation. "Happygrams" and "Happy Calls" (i.e., notes or phone calls with good news about students) are two interventions that have been used effectively in English. Notes and phone calls, delivered in Spanish, can help parents feel that someone at the school cares.

Attitudes of school personnel. Often school personnel's negative or condescending attitudes toward Hispanic parents have contributed to parents feeling disengaged from the schools. In these cases, communication with parents is often judgmental, written only in English, and/or filled with educational jargon. Without a concerted effort from the school to change this communication style and to initiate contact, most minority parents will not approach teachers. Apprehension about interacting with school personnel often may be attributed to the parents feeling uncomfortable with confrontation (Dornbusch & Ritter, 1988).

In addition, many schools perceive low-income parents as unable to participate in schools due to the immensity of their life problems (Leitch & Tangri, 1988). As a result, schools become reluctant to initiate and maintain meaningful contact. Staff training and direct

contact with parents should be furnished by the schools to help dispel negative stereotypes that school personnel hold about LEP minority parents (Bermúdez & Padrón, 1987a). The effects of teacher practices on increasing parental involvement are further addressed in Chapter 4.

School personnel need to make every possible effort to provide flexible and varied opportunities for parents to become involved. Many researchers have found evidence that, given the opportunity, parents are willing participants. Berliner and Casanova (1985) report that parents generally try to follow what teachers ask them to do. According to Epstein (1984), parent participation and respect for teachers increased in direct proportion to the amount of instructional responsibility given to them by teachers. Additionally, most parents, regardless of socioeconomic or educational background, have been found to view schools as a vehicle to improve their children's future (National Coalition of Advocates for Students (NCAS), 1988; Weir, 1986).

Nonetheless, parents perceive the school's role as being more important than theirs in imparting education (Bermúdez & Padrón, 1987a; NCAS, 1988). Although teachers seem to be fairly aware of the significance of parental involvement (Epstein & Dauber, 1991), a long-range systematic plan is not commonly found in the schools. It takes more than a few enlightened teachers to make the home-school partnership work.

Barriers Impeding Teachers

In most schools, the key to parent involvement will depend on school-initiated efforts (Inger, 1992). However, obstacles can impede these efforts.

Middle class professionals may have difficulty understanding the culturally and linguistically diverse families of their students. The reason may be traced to these professionals having internalized a single set of behavioral standards and mores, compliance with which they believe is the only avenue to social and academic success for their students. These standards can become rigid, making dialogue with parents difficult.

More specifically, teachers have cited the following barriers to effective communication with parents: (a) negative attitudes toward parents, (b) unfamiliar cultures, (c) language barriers, (d) lack of

training in working with parents, (e) lack of time to develop parent involvement activities due to increased responsibilities, and (f) lack of institutional support.

Negative attitudes toward parents. Many teachers have reported frustration with parents over the following issues: (a) parents' unrealistic expectations of the school's role, (b) parents' inability to help with schoolwork, (c) their belief that schools are not important enough to interrupt work, (d) their large families, and (e) their jealousy of teachers' higher class status (Leitch & Tangri, 1988, p. 73). In addition, parental anxiety or distrust in dealing with schools is often mistaken for apathy, lack of parental support for schooling, or lack of caring about their children's learning. Direct contact with parents, however, has been shown to improve teachers' attitudes about parents (Bermúdez & Padrón, 1988).

It has been reported that teachers in Chapter I schools believe that lack of desire to actively participate in the schools keeps parents from involvement (Epstein & Dauber, 1991). The researchers, however, found that parents perceived the situation differently. Parents claimed lack of teacher guidance in how to help their children was the reason for not being more involved. To eliminate such misperceptions, parents and teachers need a comprehensive training program to develop home-school communication skills and more direct contact. (refer to Chapter 5).

Unfamiliar cultures. Biases and prejudice may be the result of fear of the unknown. Teachers have indicated their misgivings prior to meeting parents, particularly parents from culturally diverse environments (Bermúdez & Padrón, 1988). Not knowing how to relate to parents, or even what to talk about, threatens teachers' comfort zones, convincing them that avoiding parental contact is the best way to deal with their negative feelings. Teachers have recognized the need for training to develop skills in communicating transculturally so that they can be more effective in dialoguing with minority parents.

Language barriers. Inability to communicate in languages other than English has been cited as a common barrier for teachers in trying to connect with LEP parents. Using parent advocates as interpreters and recruiters of other parents can help close the language gap between homes and schools. In addition, for schools to fulfill their obligation to disseminate student-related information to homes, messages must be communicated in the parents' language.

Hispanic parents have indicated an interest in knowing more about schools, including receiving information about their children's progress (Chavkin & Williams, 1993). However, parents who do not understand English or grading systems have a difficult time understanding teachers' practices.

Training. Few teachers and administrators have had opportunities to deal with culturally and linguistically diverse parents (Inger, 1992). Training can help. Formal training can also facilitate school personnel's acceptance and appreciation of cultural diversity, thus paving the way for equal status for parents in teaming with teachers. The home-school dialogue starts by eliminating communication that talks "at" parents rather than "with" them. The subtlety will not go unnoticed by parents, who have interpreted the generally condescending demeanor of schools as a way to exclude them.

Preservice and inservice programs and increased direct contact with parents help dispel misconceptions surrounding homes and replaces them with concrete images of Hispanic home environments (Bermúdez & Padrón, 1988). Additionally, such training and contact builds a more appreciative view of the parental role in education (Palestis, 1993). Chapter 5 will present fundamentals of parent and teacher training to enhance these partnerships.

Increased responsibilities. Take-home learning activities and close monitoring of their use can be effective strategies for the home-school team in supporting academic achievement of students. However, it takes a lot of time to prepare these activities, time that is usually spent by teachers preparing for their classes (García, 1990). Involving parents in the educational scene requires additional time that teachers may not have due to increased state academic requirements and related paperwork. Moles (1993) suggests adding a parent-liaison staff member to the schools to help teachers prepare activities and relieve them from other responsibilities. In addition, it may serve to establish a powerful link with the community (Vandegrift & Greene, 1992).

Institutional support. Securing institutional support, particularly from principals, has been reported as a critical feature of successful parent involvement programs. Administrators can help make structural changes to remove barriers dividing homes and schools. However, administrators do not always place a high priority on supporting strong partnerships with parents (Chavkin & Williams, 1987) due to either narrow views on what parents can do or budget constraints

affecting their schools. Typically, home-oriented parental involvement practices (e.g., helping students at home) are viewed most favorably by administrators as less disruptive to their agenda. In most places, fiscal shortages often threaten new school initiatives; in these cases, reallocation of resources becomes the only way to support newly identified needs. Experience has shown, though, that for parental involvement to become a reality, administrators have to make it a funding priority. Inadequate resources translate into inappropriate materials and a lack of training for staff and parents, both essential components of successful home-school collaborations.

Many school-based barriers can block the progress of efforts to establish contact with culturally and linguistically diverse homes and, likewise, stand in the way of parents responding positively to the school's efforts. Empowering parents can be perceived as a very real threat by school personnel; however, the benefits of parental involvement far outweigh the potential cost.

A Study of Teacher Attributes Related to Parent Involvement

Positive teacher attitudes about parental roles in the schools are essential attributes for the success of parent involvement programs. Generally, mutual misunderstanding and distrust are what keep homes and schools from working together.

The nature and extent of teacher practices are important predictors for success in involving parents at school and at home (Dauber & Epstein, 1993). However, although teachers seem to have great expectations as to what parents should do, few actually carry out strategies to assist parents (Chavkin & Williams, 1993; Epstein & Dauber, 1991). Successful teachers initiate efforts to engage parents, understanding that parents invariably perceive teachers as being "in charge of" getting them involved.

As documented earlier, teacher attitudes can be critical in either impeding or facilitating parental access to the schools. A study being conducted by Prater & Bermúdez (in progress) supports that teaching experience, amount of training, and grade level taught affect the degree of teacher-generated parent involvement interventions. Findings suggest that years of teaching experience do not necessarily ensure the implementation of parental participation activities. Teachers in the early part of their careers seem to be more likely to implement activities for parents than teachers who have up to 12 years of teaching experience; however, after more than 12 years of experi-

ence, teachers increase their parental involvement initiatives. This finding seems to correspond with a three-stage cycle in teachers' professional lives: initial enthusiasm for new experiences, the realization of increased responsibilities with minimal or no school support, and finally the ability to balance teaching responsibilities and other activities such as parental involvement interventions.

Corroborating Dauber & Epstein's (1993) findings, Prater and Bermúdez (in progress) found that teachers in the elementary grades had more parental involvement activities in place than teachers in the middle or upper grades. In addition, they argue that teachers with more formal training in parent involvement are conducting significantly more activities for parents than those who are less trained.

In general, attitudes about parents may have improved through the years: No differences were detected in this study by gender, grade level, degree of education, and years of teaching experience. This in itself is an encouraging beginning. However, there seems to be a pervasive dearth of parental involvement activities in the schools participating in this study. These findings have several implications. First, specific instruction on parent involvement issues must become a part of formal higher education, including field experience opportunities in which parents and teachers meet face-to-face in a supportive environment (Bermúdez & Padrón, 1988). Second, schools need to provide inservice training on parent-related issues as an ongoing activity to keep staff updated on the extensive body of research studies in the area. Third, schools must support teachers across grade levels and gender in their efforts to develop activities to involve parents. It is imperative that both male and female teachers become involved to guide and serve as role models for fathers as well as mothers. Having activities for parents of older children is also an important consideration for schools in trying to address not only academic achievement, but children's social behavior as well.

Chapter 4 provides a framework for understanding parental involvement roles. In addition, the chapter addresses specific interventions and model programs that schools can consider in the process of developing parental participation programs.

Highlights of Chapter 3

The purpose of this chapter was to explain the barriers that keep schools and homes from dialoguing and forming partnerships. The discussion included the following summary points:

- Culturally and linguistically diverse families remain alienated from the school system due to a variety of circumstances, including (a) work interference, (b) lack of confidence, (c) lack of English language skills, (d) lack of understanding of the home-school partnership, (e) lack of understanding of the school system, (f) negative past experiences with schools, and (g) insensitivity and hostility on the part of school personnel.
- On the other hand, teachers have cited the following barriers to effective communication with parents: (a) endorsing negative stereotypes about parents, (b) fearing and distrusting culturally diverse parents and their lifestyles, (c) not understanding the parents' home language, (d) lack of training in dealing with parents, (e) lack of time to develop parent involvement activities due to increased responsibilities, and (f) lack of institutional support.
- Positive teacher attitudes about parental roles in the schools are essential attributes for the success of parent involvement programs. Generally, misunderstanding and mistrust between parents and educators are impediments to finding ways to help homes and schools work together. Training both parties can help improve feelings, attitudes, and perceptions of each other.

CHAPTER 4

Parental Roles, Strategies, and Programs for Effective Home-School Engagement

When planning ways to increase Hispanic parent involvement, it helps to understand the roles that parents play in the education of their children. This chapter introduces parent involvement roles and discusses strategies and programs that schools have used successfully around the country.

Generally, parents recognize that their lack of knowledge about how to help their children learn has hindered their involvement in the schools (Chavkin & Williams, 1993; Stallworth & Williams, 1982). Parents from all ethnic backgrounds indicate their interest in performing various roles, given the opportunity and the background knowledge. In one study, 75 percent of the Hispanic parents interviewed by Chavkin and Williams (1993) said schools should establish guidelines for involvement. Other studies have shown that even for those parents who take the initiative and approach the schools, there are seldom meaningful opportunities to integrate their efforts into the work of the school (Comer, 1986).

The good news is that much is known about how to create such opportunities. Recent efforts in a number of schools around the country have produced a variety of strategies and some worthy models others can adapt to local circumstances. This chapter describes a number of these successful efforts. But first we will take a closer look at the different roles parents can play in supporting education within the home, the school, and the community.

Parental Roles in the Home, School, and Community

Different researchers categorize parent involvement in various ways. Epstein (1992) has identified six patterns of parental involvement, beginning with the home-based efforts to provide basic necessities and support, and progressing through increasingly complex

levels of involvement in the schools and in the community. Her typology includes the following involvement patterns: (a) basic parenting, (b) responding to effective and clear communication strategies used by schools, (c) becoming involved in the schools, (d) becoming involved in home learning, (e) becoming involved in advocacy and governance, and (f) working with schools and community agencies to strengthen the three-way partnership.

This chapter will base its discussion on an older and simpler typology developed by Gordon (1978). Gordon's scheme includes three foci for parent involvement, each one of which deserves attention in program planning efforts: (a) involvement with children in the home, (b) involvement with children and personnel at the school, and (c) involvement in supportive efforts based in the community. Continuous support from home, school, and community are important ingredients for student academic success and parents can play active roles in each of these domains to enhance student learning and achievement (see Figure 1). Described next are the three basic roles parents can play and some basic actions schools can take to facilitate parents' involvement within each of these three arenas—home, school, and community.

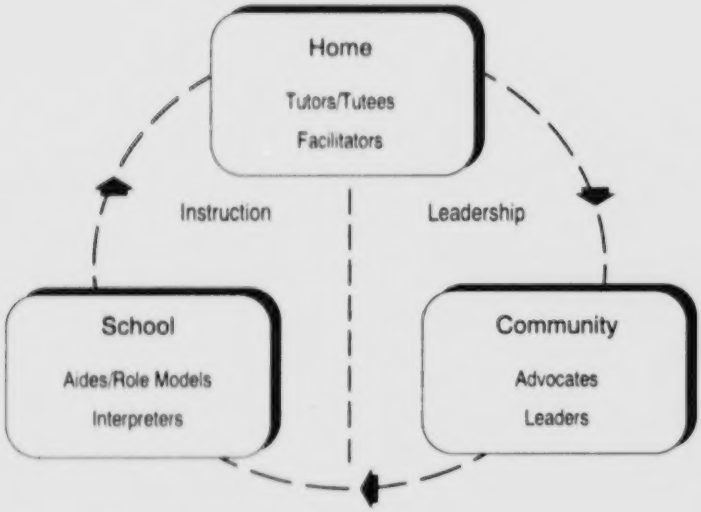

Figure 1. Parental Roles in Leadership and Instruction

Involvement in the home. Beyond the basic obligation of parents to nurture and provide sustenance for their children, parents can also actively promote learning. Children show gains in achievement when parents act as tutors, provide a supportive study atmosphere, monitor homework activities, and initiate learning activities (Epstein & Dauber, 1991).

Being a home tutor—that is, helping children at home with their schoolwork—is one of the most common roles performed by parents, including parents who do not become involved otherwise. Non-English-speaking parents also can be instrumental in this capacity by developing home language literacy, creating a supportive learning environment, monitoring the completion of homework, and expecting their children to do well. Teachers can help by locating activities that do not require English expertise or activities that "turn the table" and make students play the role of tutor for their parents. Extended family members caring for the children can also be involved in these activities.

It is easy to see how raising parents' English language skills and literacy level can help them home tutor their children. This is particularly critical since the majority of young Hispanics in or about to enter school have mothers who have not completed high school and who could be harboring negative feelings about education (Hispanic Policy Development Project, 1989, p. 5). By aggressively pursuing family education programs including ESL, schools and communities can prevent the cycle of failure and of social marginality associated with illiteracy.

Involvement in the school. Parents' interest in school participation has been well documented. In a recent study, Hispanic parents indicated strong interest in several potential areas of involvement, including evaluating their child's progress, choosing discipline methods, helping with homework assignments, setting school behavior rules, and setting rules for grading and passing children (Chavkin & Williams, 1993, p. 78).

At school there are many ways parents can get involved:

- assist in classroom instruction as teacher aides,
- act as role models by sharing cultural experiences and customs in classroom presentations,
- volunteer language skills by acting as interpreters for other parents to facilitate the home-school dialogue,

- participate in after-school programs,
- supervise student behavior, and
- staff telephones to help contact other parents.

Different activities require different levels of commitment, and if the school schedule conflicts with the parents' work schedules, do not overlook the possibility of recruiting extended family members to perform some of these jobs.

Generally, parents do not get involved in activities such as these spontaneously. When school personnel do not organize themselves to include parents in the work of the school, parents sense that their participation is unwelcome or unimportant and usually will remain distant (Comer, 1986). This distancing occurs even though school events are well attended. Continuous and meaningful contact with the schools, augmented by parent training in how schools operate, generally will keep parents involved. Specific programs and strategies are described later in this chapter.

As copartners, parents expand the human capital of the schools while providing invaluable links with communities. Once engaged in school life, they become the best recruiters of other parents. This is particularly helpful for LEP parents, whose social interaction is typically limited to their immediate communities.

Involvement in the community. Parents can play powerful roles to support education through involvement in the community. As mentioned above, parents who are involved in schools can be the most effective agents for reaching out to parents who are apprehensive or overburdened.

Besides offering parent-to-parent assistance, parents also can establish networks for promoting educational changes. Garnering community support for programs and legislation that promote educational equity is easier when strong parent advocacy groups are at work in the community to "sell the schools." LEP parents have few advocates, and have remained disenfranchised from English-only institutions representing mainstream values.

This type of involvement requires sophistication about the system and access to information. Both can be developed through leadership training that empowers parents by teaching skills needed to network, mentor, advocate, and assert their rights. However, preparing parents for this critical role is the approach least favored by school administrators and teachers (Chavkin & Williams, 1987), who

may see it as interfering with the work of the "professionals." Chavkin and Williams (1993) indicate that very few minority parents receive opportunities for involvement in advocacy, school decision making, evaluation, or budgeting.

How does a school community decide where to begin? Probably the best way to start is to ask the parents themselves what they consider to be the highest priority needs. Based on parents' needs, interests, and experience, make choices about what sorts of programs to try. Chapter 6 provides more information about how to get organized to conduct such a study. The following section provides descriptions of effective practices and strategies used by schools to facilitate parent involvement in the home, school, and community.

Proven Practices and Strategies

Studies have shown that the *quality* of practices chosen in school efforts to improve parent involvement affects the outcome (Dauber & Epstein, 1993). Therefore, it is important to design interventions that are comprehensive, systematic, long term, and involve parents as integral members of the school team. It is also important to evaluate such efforts and make adjustments as time goes by.

In general, activities that do not initially require a great investment of parents' time and effort are most effective in building the initial rapport between homes and schools (Vandegrift & Greene, 1992). Another basic practice is to make it easy for parents to participate in an activity at the school by providing transportation, child care, and materials in the parents' language (Inger, 1992). Once parents have been brought into contact with the schools, it is important that structures exist for maintaining parent involvement.

Assigning a special space for parents in the school building (e.g., a parent resource center, a parents' lounge, or a family center) facilitates communication between parents and school personnel and allows parents to share concerns and ideas with each other. In addition, these spaces nurture a sense of belonging in the school setting. Some schools provide a lending library with books, videos, computers, and other resources to enhance parents' knowledge about schools and about their children's intellectual, social, and emotional development (Johnson, 1993).

Other helpful ingredients for developing strong in-school participation include:

- finding out early in the year interest levels and role preferences of individual parents,
- matching parents in parent-to-parent teams,
- providing child care for in-school activities,
- arranging transportation, and
- setting up flexible schedules that provide opportunities to participate during the evenings and on weekends.

To further ensure contact with the home, if parents are still unable to attend activities, a proxy of their choice should be acceptable to the school. The frequency of extended family child care arrangements among Hispanics suggests consideration of this option.

The practices described next are those shown to be effective in involving parents and enhancing the home-school partnerships. Keep in mind the three roles parents can play—in the home, the school, and the community—as you read through these descriptions. Some of these practices and strategies are useful in facilitating parents' roles in all three arenas; others are most helpful in only one. For the purposes of this discussion, the interventions have been sorted into the following categories:

- *social* (e.g., open houses);
- *informational* (e.g., home visits, parent-teacher conferences, phone calls, newsletters, and parent-teacher organizations);
- *educational* (e.g., workshops and minicourses);
- *supportive of the home* (e.g., day care, nutrition and health, psychological and career counseling, support groups, and clothing banks); and
- *role-modeling and leadership-oriented* (e.g., class visits, volunteer programs, advisory committees, and task forces).

Social activities. Social events at school can facilitate contact in a nonthreatening fashion using community members, and other parents, as "buffers" between parents and school personnel (Petersen & Warnsby, 1992). Activities that publicly recognize parent participation at school pave the way for community involvement. For example, the school principal can issue a proclamation for a "Parent Appreciation Day," which becomes acknowledged by city officials (Schurr, 1992). This type of activity provides school-based opportunities for parents to socialize and get to know school personnel.

Other such opportunities to consider include students' skits and performances, cultural awareness activities, choral concerts, and family photo nights (Petersen & Warnsby, 1992).

However, social gatherings do not necessarily have to take place only at the school. Gatherings in parent residences can also provide a sociable context for establishing a dialogue between schools and families. Identify parent volunteers who would be willing to help organize gatherings with other parents and prepare food and refreshments. This author recently attended a "house meeting" in an inner-city south Texas community. The meeting was conducted in Spanish and chaired by a parent volunteer who coordinated the event. The principal and two teachers came to discuss school and neighborhood safety with parents who participated enthusiastically, offering their advice on the topic. School staff and parents collaborated to hold similar meetings frequently during the year to discuss mutually agreed-upon agenda items.

Social activities help familiarize parents with the school setting or with particular staff members and create positive experiences associated with the school. However, these activities should not be an end in themselves but only a first step toward attaining higher levels of involvement.

Informational activities. Information can be transmitted to and from parents in a variety of ways. Some one-way vehicles are memos, newsletters, and flyers. Memos from teachers are the most frequent form of communication between teachers and parents (Epstein, 1983). However, these communications must be written in the language of the parents to make parents feel that the effort to communicate is genuine.

The most effective means for information transfer are personal, two-way communication strategies that allow parents and school personnel opportunities to meet face-to-face. Examples include home visits, parent-teacher conferences, field trips, and parent-teacher organizations.

Home visits vary widely in their focus but are the most effective way to contact hard-to-reach parents. They require a commitment of time and effort on the part of school staff and support from the principal. Several schools in the Rio Grande Valley of Texas use this strategy to reach the homes of migrant students located in insulated and poverty-stricken areas; parents generally respond enthusiastically. The message of the visits has emphasized the importance of

parental involvement in the schools, and parents are personally invited to attend upcoming school activities. As a follow-up, the schools offer orientation workshops, report card nights, and parent training in participation and leadership. The parents interviewed have expressed excitement and honor at being considered important enough to be included in school plans. Parents cite as a drawback the lack of similar activities at the higher grade levels districtwide: As children are promoted past the early elementary school grades, the homes lose contact with the schools.

Field trips to tour the school, library, and other school facilities or lunch-hour or after-school picnics have also been successful in bringing parents together with other parents and with school personnel. In the process, parents learn about how schools operate and feel more comfortable approaching teachers and other school personnel.

Parent-teacher organizations could also serve as a medium for establishing two-way communication between homes and schools. However, these organizations generally fail to realize their potential for improving the extent and continuity of contact between parents and school personnel, or of creating a more positive climate for parents in the schools (Comer, 1986).

Educational activities. A common educational activity is training parents via workshops, minicourses, seminars, or videos. This is such an important parent involvement strategy that it will be taken up in much greater detail in Chapter 5. Training programs aim at imparting skills necessary for parents to function effectively in all three roles. Most educational programs for Hispanic parents are divided into three major content categories: (1) ESL; (2) skills needed to facilitate participation in roles in the home, school, or community (e.g., home tutoring, teacher aide, volunteer, community advocate); and (3) self-help programs (e.g., increasing self-esteem, assertiveness training, cooking and sewing workshops).

To improve the effectiveness and relevance of educational activities designed for parents, it helps to ask the parents themselves what they would like to learn. ESL has been identified by many parents as a crucial area of need for the Hispanic community (Padrón & Bermúdez, 1986). Lack of language skills prevents many Hispanic parents from accessing information regarding opportunities for their children, and limits their abilities as home tutors and their participation in school activities.

Usually, it is a good idea to offer a variety of content categories

when training LEP parents (see Chapter 5). By attending school-organized workshops and training programs, parents can increase their English proficiency while developing knowledge and skills needed to function better within the school culture.

Training programs have been shown to be effective in a number of ways, from changing parents' attitudes and perceptions about schools and about themselves, to becoming more cognizant of the institutional workings of schools (Bermúdez & Padrón, 1987a). The important thing to remember in program content planning is to seek parental input in choosing topics. Schurr (1992) identified mutual goal setting as a proven way to involve parents in the partnership with schools.

Addressing parents' basic needs. It would be unrealistic to imagine parents taking an active role in their children's educations when they have basic survival needs that remain unmet. Several federal education programs provide good models for addressing the health and social welfare of families they serve, and for providing basic parenting training.

Head Start services for preschoolers and parents, for example, have long provided for certain basic needs of families. Heralded as "the premier educational program" for the current administration (Shalala, 1994), Head Start programs invest in the family's emotional and physical health, realizing that basic health is needed before parents can perform an active role in their children's learning.

One example of a program that attends to basic mental health issues is the Mental Health Prevention/Intervention Project, sponsored by the Latin American Civic Association in Los Angeles, which includes the following activities:

- training Head Start teachers about children's emotional development and socialization, and how to identify problems that could lead to long-term emotional damage;
- parent training, conducted in the parents' home languages, addressing support for parents' educational role at home; and
- collaboration of parents and teachers as members of the mental health treatment team (Hutchinson, Martínez, Ortega, De Mello, & Robin-Deng, 1986).

Role-modeling and leadership activities. Research has pointed out that few programs have engaged parents as instructional volun-

teers (Melaragno, Keesling, Lyons, Robbins, & Smith, 1981). Although they can make valuable contributions to bilingual instruction, for example, parents do not see their participation in these programs as very productive since their lack of English skills makes them feel inferior (Carrasquillo & Carrasquillo, 1979). Videos showing how other parents help in the schools have been used to increase Hispanic parents' determination to participate as volunteers (Cavazos, 1992).

Generally, minority parents most often participate in low-level involvement activities at school, including attending PTA or PTO, open houses, and other school events, or visiting the school to "see what's going on." In contrast, they participated less in decision-making roles, such as hiring a teacher, helping with lesson plans, planning budgets, and providing ideas for change (Chavkin & Williams, 1993, p. 79). Even when parents participate in these activities, their contributions have little or no influence in school district operations (Melaragno et al., 1981).

The ability to participate in the development or restructuring of a community's educational system requires extensive knowledge of how individuals and value systems fit together in all of their complexity. This knowledge includes being able to identify barriers to change, the relative importance of various factors in meeting the community's goals, and areas where there may be some freedom to make changes. These forms of knowledge are outside the reach of most parents, who do not work from within the system. Ability to create change in schools implies an insider's view of how schools operate and what specific roles participants must perform to carry out the desired change. Parents need to be invited into the system and provided with opportunities to obtain knowledge and skills so they can be a part of improving schools' effectiveness. Several projects have been designed with these objectives in mind.

Project Better Day, for example, was a year-long demonstration project designed to develop leadership among the hard-to-reach inner city parents (Petersen & Warnsby, 1992). The project used community agencies to facilitate the initial home-school contact and planned activities to progressively engage these parents by inviting them first to nonthreatening gatherings at schools with their children (e.g., family photo night, choral concerts, and skits). An outreach committee was formed composed of parents, a teacher, a community member, and a facilitator. The committee coordinated other activi-

ties (including a home literacy training component), selected the themes for gatherings, developed recruitment techniques, and identified parents to be contacted. In addition, committee parent representatives attended a leadership training program that helped parents develop skills in networking, teamwork, action planning, and communication. The project evaluation revealed the following findings: (a) the importance of the principal's support for the success of the program, (b) the discouraging effect on volunteers due to lack of compensation, (c) the identification of home visits as the best means for connecting with parents, and (d) the importance of training the parent leadership.

Final Thoughts on Practices and Strategies

Programs that involve parents only superficially or are short-lived remedies can detract from more beneficial forms of parent involvement. Parent teacher organizations could be a source of personal and direct communication among the home, the school, and the community, but such organizations do not always meet their potential. Activities must be relevant and long term; short-term operations tend to backfire, producing discontent and mistrust in the parents. Participant attrition is high among programs that lack clear purposes (Sandoval, 1986).

Evaluating outcomes in terms of improved academic achievement of students needs to be a central component of these parent involvement programs. Both formative evaluation, for program planning and development, and summative evaluation, for dissemination and research purposes, need to be integrated into the program to measure benefits, strengths, and limitations.

Most model parent involvement programs include a parent training component. Parents as learners, as mentors of their children, or as community leaders are three of the many roles parents can play; each role requires the development of specific skills. Adding new understandings and new skills to parents' and teachers' repertoires is the topic of the next chapter.

Highlights of Chapter 4

The purpose of this chapter was to describe effective strategies and programs that can be used to promote various roles parents play in the education of their children. The discussion included the following summary points:

- Parents from all ethnic backgrounds indicate that they are interested in performing a variety of roles, given the opportunity and the background knowledge. However, there are few meaningful opportunities to integrate their efforts into their children's learning experiences (Comer, 1986).
- Epstein has identified six types of parental involvement patterns: (a) parenting skills, (b) responding to effective and clear communication strategies used by schools, (c) becoming involved in the schools, (d) becoming involved in home learning, (e) becoming involved in advocacy and governance, and (f) working with schools and community agencies to strengthen the three-way partnership.
- According to a typology developed by Gordon (1978), there are three basic foci for parent involvement, each of which deserves attention in program planning efforts: (a) involvement with children in the home, (b) involvement with children and personnel at the school, and (c) involvement in supportive efforts based in the community.
- Parent involvement programming should make it easy for parents to participate by providing transportation, child care, and materials in the parents' language.
- Typical intervention practices used by the schools nationwide include strategies that are: *social* (e.g., open houses); *informational* (e.g., home visits, parent-teacher conferences, phone calls, newsletters, and parent-teacher organizations); *educational* (e.g., workshops and minicourses), *supportive of the home* (e.g., day care, nutrition and health, psychological and career counseling, support groups, and clothing banks); and *role-modeling and leadership-oriented* (e.g., class visits, volunteer programs, advisory committees, and task forces).

CHAPTER 5

Training as a Catalyst for Teachers and Parents

Without appropriate training, educators and Hispanic parents are ill-prepared to establish and maintain effective contact. This chapter looks at how training can help both teachers and parents learn to perform their roles more effectively.

Establishing an effective home-school communication network requires the development of specialized skills and knowledge in all participants. Parents need to feel confident about themselves and understand their important role in the education of their children. They also need to develop a working knowledge of how the educational system functions and of how and when to talk to school personnel. Similarly, teachers and other school "partners" must understand the culture of the parents and develop respect and appreciation for cultural and linguistic diversity. In addition, the language gap among participants needs to be narrowed. Using interpreters (e.g., parent advocates) from among the parent ranks can assist on a temporary basis. Schools can offer ESL training for parents and language courses for their personnel to promote mutual understanding and to provide, through direct contact, an opportunity to develop respect for the role that each party can perform best in the home-school partnership.

Although parent training programs have become prevalent in education, the need for quality control remains an elusive issue. Toomey (1986) indicated that involvement programs generally increased educational *inequality* because schools tended to favor the parents who do not need help. Training hard-to-reach parents and developing systematic, comprehensive, and long-term programs are necessary ingredients for expanding successful home-school communication. Few efforts have been recorded in the literature regarding teacher training programs that include guidance in how to deal with parents, particularly those who are language minorities. As

Chavkin and Williams (1988) indicate, "Everyone agrees that teachers need better skills for involving parents in the education of their children, but few teacher education institutions emphasize such skills" (p. 87).

We will begin our investigation of the role of training programs by looking first at teacher training.

Teacher Training Programs

The evidence supporting the importance of the parent's role in educating children is too strong to ignore. It is time for teacher preservice and inservice training programs to focus on the cultural and linguistic aspects in this relationship—especially when the backgrounds of teachers (or teacher trainees) and the families they serve differ (Fradd, Weismantel, Correa, & Algozzine, 1988).

Training teachers to train parents. An example of a comprehensive inservice program for teachers that includes parent training and research is reported by this author and associates (Bermúdez & Padrón 1987a, 1988, 1989, 1990; Bermúdez & Rakow, 1992). Our program involves a collaboration between a university and a school district to integrate parent and teacher education into the inservice teacher training curriculum. The model we developed includes both clinical and research experiences for teachers who will be dealing with language-minority parents. (A more detailed report of this work is included in the Appendix for those interested in adopting a similar approach.)

The graduate students spend four weeks on campus preparing lessons, reviewing methods and strategies to teach adult ESL literacy, and rehearsing lessons to be taught to the parents. They devote time to planning parent recruitment strategies with the corresponding school district and to learning how to conduct a needs assessment in order to determine content of the parent training they will provide. A thorough guide for carrying out similar surveys of parents appears in a recent report by Epstein, Connors, & Clark-Salinas (1993). The first section of the report includes questionnaires for teachers, parents, and students.

The research dimension of the teacher training model consisted of a six-semester-hour projects course for inservice teachers completing their research requirement for a master's degree. The course exposed the students to qualitative and quantitative research methodology and assisted them in designing a parent-focused research design.

At the end of the course, preservice and inservice teachers who participated in the training are able to prepare and deliver effective lessons in ESL and issues related to parent involvement, evaluate the usefulness of program materials, work effectively in a team-teaching context, and perform several research-related functions.

Equally important, as teachers come into direct contact with parents, some of the enigma surrounding the home is replaced with a more objective perception of the home environment (Bermúdez & Padrón, 1988). In addition, direct training of school staff, particularly teachers, ensures a climate of comfort and acceptance of minority parents as resourceful partners in the educational mission of the schools (Palestis, 1993).

Training teachers to learn from parents. Teachers of Hispanic or other minority students often overlook the parents of their students as sources of valuable information—cultural and otherwise—that can be used to increase teacher effectiveness in the classroom. Home cultural resources and learning practices are tools that can be effectively incorporated by teachers to enhance classroom learning. For example, 11 Arizona elementary school teachers of at-risk students participated in a pilot program sponsored by the Kellogg Foundation. The program trained parents to collect information regarding the household's learning resource potential for their classrooms. Ninety-seven homes were observed and the data collected were integrated into learning modules to be used in the classroom. Teachers reported the effectiveness of this method in tailoring instruction to meet the needs of their students (Vélez-Ibáñez, Moll, González, & Neff, 1991).

Activities that validate Spanish-speaking families' social and cultural experiences are the most effective in engaging and maintaining parent involvement (Delgado-Gaitán, 1991). Relatedly, learning to seek information from the community that is being served and to use that information in planning can be a breakthrough for many school personnel. Schools should not be in the business of telling parents what they need. Some researchers recommend that prior to planning any program for parents, a thorough needs assessment instrument must be developed and administered to the community (see e.g., Epstein, Connors, & Clark-Salinas, 1993). Delgado-Gaitán (1991) compared open house programs for Hispanic low-income parents that utilized parent-generated items for the program agenda with those that used school personnel's ideas. She found greater atten-

dance levels (up to 90%) at the meetings that dealt with issues that parents themselves had identified as priorities.

Questionnaires to gather information from parents should address the following areas: type of service needed by the parents, curriculum content (if educational), format of the program, schedule of events and activities, time, place, and support needs. Ask about barriers to parent participation. These barriers need to be considered in planning, recruiting, and retaining parents in the program. Typical arrangements made to overcome barriers include providing childcare services and transportation to and from school, using translators to communicate with parents when teachers do not speak Spanish, and scheduling activities at times when both fathers and mothers can attend. The data will help planners make relevant and practical decisions. Planning proceeds from the data: selecting a format (e.g., workshop or minicourse); developing a syllabus; and formulating a plan for implementation. Personnel, resources, meeting places, and budgets usually have to be decided as a unit, since expenditures in one area affect expenditures in other areas. Securing financial support from local, state, or federal sources will get the project up and running. Finally, formative as well as summative evaluation must be conducted to measure short- and long-term effects of the program on parents, school staff, students, and the surrounding community; and to discover ways to improve.

Taking these steps requires developing a school culture that seeks out and honors the views of parents in a number of ways—in selecting culturally sensitive methods to be used in the classroom, themes for school open houses, topics for parent workshops, or feedback from parents regarding the overall success of the school's efforts. In short, involving parents in school planning works best when teachers understand parent involvement to be an essential element in the organizational underpinning of the school, and key to the success of educating Hispanic students. Teacher training can move a staff in that direction.

Chapter 4 detailed the various roles that parents can perform to support their children's education in the home, the school, and the community. Each role requires the development of specific skills, knowledge, and attitudes. In general, though, topics frequently identified by language minority parents as high priority include home language literacy, ESL skills, school curriculum, and home-school-community activities. Table 1 (page 48) presents a summary of topics that some schools have included in parent training. The following sections describe training strategies and programs orga-

nized by parental involvement roles in the home, school, and community.

Training Parents for More Involvement in the Home

Hispanic parents—like many other parents—may lack skills to effectively assist their young at home. Parents in general have voiced their interest in being better informed regarding strategies to use at home, teacher expectations, and homework (Dauber & Epstein, 1989). Some have even requested assistance from parent support groups to provide them with the information they need to be effective partners in their children's educations (Leitch & Tangri, 1988). A sample of Hispanics from the southwestern United States also indicated their need for guidance from teachers on how to help their children with schoolwork (Chavkin & Williams, 1989).

Here are some ways schools can help through guidance and training.

Evaluation. Parents can be given simple learning-at-home techniques keyed to lessons their children are receiving at school. These can include checklists parents can use to evaluate children's progress in meeting lesson objectives. Such monitoring or evaluation can help develop a sense of their children's potential for learning. Having such an understanding is important for parents in their role as their child's advocate for special programs (e.g., ESL, special education, gifted and talented programs).

Promoting learning. Parents with limited skills in English also can play an active role. Hester (1989) suggested some practical ideas for ways staff can empower these parents: (a) provide them with information regarding their child's progress that will inform them of times when extra help is needed, (b) organize a directory of parent resource people with bilingual expertise, (c) provide suggestions or training on techniques to create a positive home learning environment, (d) promote adopt-a-school programs that use parent-tutors, and (e) provide parents with information regarding questioning techniques and homework.

Promoting literacy. Training parents in techniques that stress reading books or sharing oral history helps create a literate environment at home. Strategies most widely used for promoting literacy include encouraging parents to read to children and listen to children read; take their children to the library; and use loaned books and teaching materials from school (Epstein, 1987).

The program, "Family Literacy: *Aprendiendo, Mejorando, Educando*" (Learning, Improving, Educating) (FLAME) focuses on developing inner-city Hispanic parents' skills in promoting children's literacy achievement. This program addresses the following home learning components: literacy modeling, literacy opportunity, literacy interaction, and home-school relationships. Data collected through interviews with parent participants, case studies, and anecdotes show that these parents' knowledge about schools and home learning resources increased through training; making them more effective in working with teachers to improve their children's learning (Rodríguez-Brown & Mulhern, 1992).

Providing a supportive structure. Types of parent-child interactions as they relate to achievement were studied by Benson, Medrich, and Buckley (1980). They divide parent-child interactions into four categories: (a) everyday interactions (e.g., eating dinner together); (b) cultural enrichment (e.g., reading together at home); (c) parent involvement (e.g., volunteerism); and (d) control over children's activities (e.g., home rules). Across socioeconomic levels, the authors found that parent involvement and control over children's activities (items c and d) had a significant effect on student achievement, which may suggest some directions for parent training.

Project AVANCE-San Antonio, Inc. (Texas) is a private effort to develop parenting skills in low-income Hispanic mothers. Using outreach strategies such as door-to-door recruitment in neighborhoods has succeeded in engaging participants in a nine-month program for parents of children under four years of age. Objectives of the program include imparting skills and knowledge in areas related to child abuse prevention, discipline, parent communication, and infant and toddler parenting. Center-based as well as home-based activities included toy making, parenting classes, support services, resources, and field trips. Home visits allowed staff to address special needs of these parents (Cortez, 1986).

Other possible directions for parent training relate to parenting styles. Dornbusch, Ritter, Liederman, Roberts, and Fraleigh (1987) found that authoritative styles (i.e., warm and supportive environments with parental control) were more conducive to promoting higher grades than permissive (i.e., children can do anything they wish without guidance or limits) or authoritarian styles (i.e., adults are always right). In addition, Hispanic females reacted more negatively to authoritarianism than their male counterparts. The study

suggests that families could benefit from becoming more aware of how they interact with their children, since this factor serves as a predictor of academic success.

Simply talking with children can have an impact on achievement. Families with more frequent interactions with their children tend to produce higher achievers (Clark, 1983).

Training Parents for More Involvement in the School

Although most parents believe that school participation is important, very few do participate (Epstein, 1987). There are many reasons for the typically low level of parent involvement in schools, some of which can be addressed by offering parent training (see Chapter 4 for other ideas).

Knowing how schools work. Not knowing how the school system works can diminish parent-school interactions. Inger (1992) reported that interactions with low-income Hispanic parents were few, or nonexistent, due mainly to apprehension about the school's operations, as well as unfamiliarity with the language used in the schools. Positive outcomes have been reported as a result of training parents about the importance of their role in the home-school team (Bermúdez & Padrón, 1987a).

Gaining confidence. Research studies indicate that the most effective parent education programs are those that (a) make parents feel important, (b) emphasize a close working relationship between parents and teachers, and (c) use concrete and structured tasks for parents to perform while helping their youngsters with schoolwork (Becher, 1984).

Empowerment programs, as opposed to deficit parent education models, are gaining prominence around the country. Emphasis on treating parents as valued participants (rather than as deficient players) can improve a program's chance for success (Nardine, 1990). One good example of this approach was demonstrated in Carpintería, California (Delgado-Gaitán, 1991). As a result of receiving training in how schools work, how to be helpful with home learning, and what specific roles parents can play in learning, a group of low-income Hispanic parents organized COPLA (Comité de Padres Latinos or Committee of Latin American Parents). This leadership group formed to learn how they could best work with the schools to improve the education of their children. COPLA organized training workshops and sharing sessions, conducted by school personnel, to assist par-

ents in garnering knowledge about school dynamics. The COPLA parents thus acted not only as advocates for their own children, but also as advocates for other parents who were less assertive or more fearful in dealing with school personnel. As a result of COPLA's collective efforts, Delgado-Gaitán reported the following areas of insight into the experiences of parents: (a) their home experiences and histories with school personnel, (b) their isolation, (c) their lack of knowledge and their commitment to learn more about schools, (d) the school's stereotypic notions about parents that block parents from becoming active participants, (e) their ideas for constructing a balanced system of interaction with the schools and the need for mutual cooperation between home and school, and (f) an interest in working with teachers to organize meaningful activities that will lead to future participation. Out of these insights, each school campus identified a teacher liaison to keep parents alerted of school happenings. A districtwide committee, formed by teachers and parents, represented the participating schools and met monthly. These collaborative efforts empowered parents to participate and make meaningful decisions on how to improve their children's learning conditions.

Training Parents for More Involvement as Leaders

Parents have reported that very few schools provide opportunities for parent involvement in decision making and advocacy (Chavkin & Williams, 1993). For parents to become effective partners, understanding how schools work (i.e., chains of command, regulations, procedures, and policies) is essential knowledge. However, few school administrators support the idea of providing parents with this type of training. Ranked in order of usefulness, administrators reported that parental involvement in students' home learning was more useful than participation in policy decisions (Chavkin & Williams, 1987).

Making decisions that affect their children's educational future requires knowledge that parents often lack (e.g, action planning, networking, building teamwork, advocating, and asserting one's views). Providing such training can have a number of payoffs. For example, parent advocates who serve as school-community liaisons have proven to be successful links with the community by working one-on-one to establish rapport with hard-to-reach parents (Vandegrift & Greene, 1992).

Also, considering that families headed by single teenage mothers

are the fastest growing category of family groups (Lewis, 1992), increasing leadership skills of Hispanic women is a way to make sure they take part in decision making. Increasing leadership skills among mothers could have an impact on the aspirations and/or career selection of their children as well. Mother-daughter programs (e.g., University of Texas at El Paso and University of Houston-Clear Lake) have been developed to expand role expectations of Hispanic women. Workshops, networking, exposure to Hispanic women in nontraditional roles, college campus field trips, and career day activities are among strategies used in these programs. In addition, mothers receive training in self-esteem, in encouraging success in their daughters' educations, and in expanding the expectations of daughters' future career plans.

Through well-planned and systematic training, parent leaders are empowered with skills that allow them to be effective in broadening their children's aspirations and opportunities for the future while mobilizing other parents to spur significant changes in schools and communities.

Suggested Topics for Parent Training Programs

It has been noted that not many parents are knowledgeable about assessing their offspring's talents or are aware of the availability of educational programs that benefit their children (Bermúdez & Padrón, 1987a). In addition, parents tend to see education as the sole responsibility of the schools, thus minimizing their important role at home. These two issues alone merit special considerations for a training program. Table 1 (page 48) presents a summary of other topics that some schools have included in parent training curricula.

In general, the training works well when it is an enrichment experience for the parents and addresses (a) ESL and awareness of the mainstream value system; (b) awareness of educational programs that can benefit the children, including bilingual, ESL, gifted and talented, and special education programs; (c) instructional strategies that can be used at home; and (d) the parental role in "making things happen" for their children, including raising parent expectations about their children's future.

Training parents and teachers for a more effective partnership will provide the necessary tools and information to perform a better job in educating language minority students. Chapter 6 discusses home-school-community partnership models to enhance parental involvement and student achievement.

Table 1

Suggested Programmatic Components for Parent Training

School/classroom learning, including awareness and knowledge of:

- classroom and school regulations (e.g., attendance, grading system, discipline)
- strategies to access the educational system—voicing ideas and concerns
- strategies to help other parents access school sources
- available programs, curricula, and resources
- the different parental roles in education (e.g., school and classroom volunteers, student and program advocates, trainers of other parents)
- effective teaching in the classroom
- parents' and students' rights in schools

Role of the home in learning—including developing:

- the ability to use methods and strategies to help students learn at home (including preliteracy activities for illiterate parents)
- skills to identify abilities and talents in their children
- skills to identify children's general strengths and learning modes
- skills to nurture sociopsychological traits (e.g., self-esteem, motivation, interpersonal communication, listening, communication)
- skills to nurture creativity
- parenting skills (e.g., grooming, nutrition, manners, effects of drug and alcohol abuse, sex education)
- awareness of the role of parental expectations
- strategies to develop second language skills at home

Highlights of Chapter 5

The purpose of this chapter was to describe research-tested teacher and parent training strategies and models. The discussion included the following summary points:

- Parent education programs, particularly those providing low-income parents with skills to help their children learn at home, have been shown to be effective in promoting language, in improving test performance, and in improving school behavior (Becher, 1984).
- Establishing an effective home-school communication network requires the development of specialized skills and knowledge in all participants.
- Training hard-to-reach parents and developing systematic, comprehensive, and long-term programs are necessary ingredients for successful home-school communication.
- Personnel training programs must begin to focus on the training of professionals to meet the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse students and their families.
- An example of a comprehensive inservice program for teachers that includes parental training and research was developed at the University of Houston-Clear Lake. In this program, a university and school district collaborate to integrate parent and teacher education into the inservice teacher training curriculum. The model includes both clinical and research experiences for teachers who will be dealing with language-minority parents.
- The clinical teacher training dimension encompasses three phases: (a) on-campus training for the inservice teachers in ESL methodology and in issues related to parental involvement, (b) supervised on-site ESL and parental involvement instruction to adults whose children attend the surrounding area schools, and (c) on-campus debriefing for the inservice teachers to discuss and evaluate the field experience.
- Parent education programs, particularly those providing low-income parents with skills to help their children learn at home, have been shown to be effective in promoting language, in improving test performance, and in improving school behaviors.
- A comprehensive parent training model should include developing knowledge, attitudes, and skills in (a) school and classroom learning and (b) the role of the home in the education process.

- Training parents to perform their in-school roles requires exposure to instructional and assessment methods, discipline, reward systems, and overall grading practices. In particular, Spanish-speaking parents can assist in bilingual classrooms, provided that effective strategies and strong teacher models are present.

CHAPTER 6

Homes, Schools, and Communities Working Together to Promote Education for Language Minorities

Keeping students in schools is a responsibility to be shared with communities. Parents and schools need to engage community support to ensure student academic success. How to access community patronage is illustrated in this chapter through a successful four-way collaborative project representing Hispanic parents, university trainers, local businesses, and school district personnel.

Developing organizational structures that encourage community ownership, parental involvement, and comprehensive and long-lasting programs for parents is the challenge for schools of the 1990s. More than passively sponsoring programs, communities need to organize themselves to help improve outcomes for youngsters who face multiple risk factors jeopardizing their chances of completing school. A report from the Committee for Economic Development (1987) cautions that failing to reach the educationally disadvantaged population will not only disenfranchise the youngsters and their families, but will also deprive the nation of political, cultural, and economic empowerment. Despite the difficulties of raising funds and recruiting volunteers to support home-school-community partnership programs, the efforts must continue in light of their beneficial role in curbing the dropout rate and in discouraging truancy.

Figure 2 presents activities that can be carried out by the different partners to provide a support system that ensures continuity among home, school, and community experiences; thus promoting children's academic achievement.

Basic goals of these undertakings should focus on encouraging students to stay in school, improving their self-concepts, expanding their career expectations, and broadening their career opportunities (Bermúdez, 1989).

Community-Based Collaborations

Grassroots efforts rather than top-down policies and projects work best for improving outcomes for language-minority students. Community-based projects can involve collaborations between the schools and various other groups, including parent groups; local governments; charitable organizations, churches, and neighborhood centers; and local business and industry. We will explore examples of each of these forms of collaboration in the next few pages. Then we will explore a model for planning similar collaborations at the local level.

Collaboration with parent groups. In California, two Accelerated Schools projects have integrated parent participation at the grassroots level, community support, and school-coordinated activities in a joint effort to bring low-income minority students up to grade level by the end of sixth grade. Parents conduct a "door-to door" campaign to get community members involved in supporting school policies for the neighborhood children (Seeley, 1989). These parent-to-parent strategies expand the human capital needed to change the way schools organize themselves to educate children. Seeley adds:

> . . . The staff of these two schools do all this, [actively seek parental input, reallocate budgets, encourage parents to enlist neighbor-

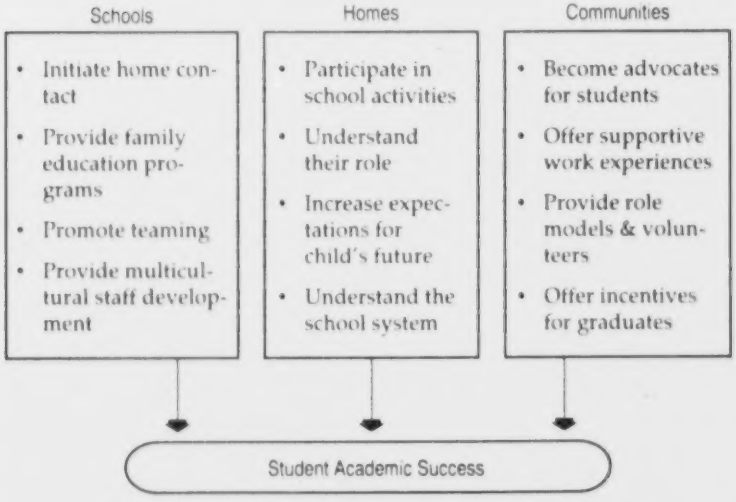
Schools
• Initiate home contact
• Provide family education programs
• Promote teaming
• Provide multicultural staff development
Homes
• Participate in school activities
• Understand their role
• Increase expectations for child's future
• Understand the school system
Communities
• Become advocates for students
• Offer supportive work experiences
• Provide role models & volunteers
• Offer incentives for graduates
Student Academic Success

Figure 2. Forming Home-School-Community Partnerships

> hood support, etc.] not as a separate parent-involvement project but as an integral part of a comprehensive plan to mobilize all available resources, including community agencies and the kids themselves (through cooperative learning and peer tutoring), to achieve their shared goal of student success (p. 47).

Collaboration with local governments. Local governments can develop programs that give their youth healthy alternatives to life in the streets. City-run facilities, such as patrolled recreation centers and parks, have been used in large metropolitan areas to combat gangs and juvenile crime. Educational programs (such as AIDS and drug awareness, self-esteem building, and school tutoring) can be offered in conjunction with physical activities and team sports. Costs of staffing and other expenses of such programs can be covered by a combination of private local endowments (or other charitable funding sources) and local parks and recreation department funding.

In cases where students' maladaptive behavior is widespread, families, communities, and schools must come to the table and generate a common plan of action. Police departments in large metropolitan areas, for example, are calling on parents to help educate children about guns in an effort to address widespread violence in the schools.

Collaboration with charitable organizations, churches, and neighborhood centers. Neighborhood mutual-help organizations can be engaged in recruiting parents and in facilitating communication between English-only schools and non-English-speaking homes. As described earlier, Project Better Day uses community agencies such as churches and neighborhood centers as "buffers" to ease first contacts between schools and hard-to-reach parents (Petersen & Warnsby, 1992). An outreach committee drafts action plans, conducts assessment, recruits participants, trains parents for leadership, and gathers parents together for activities designed to develop trust and positive feelings about their own role and the school's in educating children.

Other projects have helped organize parent self-help groups whose purposes include addressing social and economic needs of families and "selling" the schools to the community (Jackson & Cooper, 1992). These efforts spring from the understanding that it is unrealistic to expect parents to participate in schools when they face other priority needs that have not been met. Barriers to parental involvement are often based in unmet social, health, and economic needs that can best be addressed through community resources.

The Institute for Responsive Education (IRE) has established a network of over 40 urban sites that reach out to the community to help address its social and economic need (Hollifield, 1992). At these sites, parent centers function as the gathering place for meeting and sharing, while family support programs are offered to link education with health and human services. Activities described by Hollifield include (a) open houses, (b) report card nights, (c) parent conferences, (d) mentoring, (e) intergenerational literacy training, and (f) advisory and policy councils.

Collaboration with business and industry. Involving business and industry in educational partnerships can extend the school's human and financial resources, benefit the school curriculum, and provide role models to enhance minority student career aspirations. Nationwide, the number of schools reporting partnerships with businesses has increased from 17 to 40 percent since 1983 (Office of Educational Research and Improvement, 1989).

Williams and Chavkin (1989) identified the different levels of partnership with business and industry that can be sought to improve schools' reach and effectiveness in preparing citizens and leaders of the forthcoming generations. These levels include partnerships in policy changes and debates, systematic educational improvements, management, teacher training, and the classroom. Williams and Chavkin add, "Corporations are not forming partnerships with schools in a direct effort to train future employees to perform specific tasks. For the most part, business is interested in helping schools provide a sound general education that fosters literacy, mathematics skills, and problem-solving abilities" (p. 7).

An example of business helping in the area of curriculum and human resources is located in West Virginia. Originally organized to free up teachers so they could get training in using computers, Project TEACH has placed approximately 600 volunteers from 90 businesses in the public school classrooms. Experiences for students in kindergarten through the sixth grade have included field trips and demonstrations in practical skills such as writing checks, filling out job applications, and working cash registers. According to Cowan (1989), "Together...citizens are creating a new understanding of what education means to the community and what the community means to education" (p. 6).

MacDowell (1989) reports on successful partnerships that have focused on specific areas of the school curriculum for business in-

volvement. One example is "the Standard Mid-Peninsula Urban Coalition in California's Silicon Valley, which teaches electronic and computer skills, science, math and English in mini-schools, and is designed to serve potential dropouts" (p. 11).

The practice of "adopting" schools can be effective in establishing positive relationships between schools and corporations. These programs provide resources and experiences that expand student horizons while allowing businesses to develop a sense of ownership. Espinoza (1988) sums up the empowerment potential of corporate involvement in education: "Employers hold a great deal of power over the resources that enable families and schools to work together for the improvement of children's education. If that power is exercised in positive ways now, it will pay high dividends later in the form of a more skilled work force" (p. 62).

Rich (1985) suggests other community-based initiatives that can be used to extend the power of school-community-home partnerships. For example, local print and broadcast media campaigns can help educate the public about important issues related to parental participation in education, and help change a community's view of homes in the education process—from passive locations to sites where learning occurs.

Lastly, senior citizens are another group who typically remain untapped, but are an important source of volunteerism and advocacy.

Steps to Initiate a Home-School-Community Partnership

We have already touched on the idea of organizing home-school-community partnerships at the grassroots level. But how would a group get started in such an effort? While there is no "one best way," this author has had success using a model described below. In this part of our discussion, we will begin with a description of the stages in the model, followed by a description of a recent application and expansion of the model in a Texas community.

Step 1: Spearheading the program. Either a teacher or an administrator, with permission of the principal, can generate the momentum for a partnership program. A Home-School-Community Steering Committee (HSCSC) is formed to spearhead the planning. The initial activity is to identify the stakeholders (e.g., school, parents, students, community) and invite representatives to become members of the HSCSC. The committee is in charge of delineating respon-

sibilities for external funding, program coordination, participant recruitment, program implementation, and evaluation.

Step 2: Determining needs and goals of parents and community. The HSCSC develops a survey questionnaire to collect data on needs, goals, and aspirations of community parents as well as pertinent demographic data (e.g., age, gender, socioeconomic status, size of families, number of children in school, participation or affiliations in community institutions). The survey is developed in English and Spanish and administered either in writing or in a personal or telephone interview. Dissemination of the questionnaire takes many forms including (a) distribution via students, (b) door-to-door visitation by parent or school volunteers, and (c) telephone contact with parents.

Step 3: Selecting program activities. At the next HSCSC meeting, members evaluate the data collected and explore strategies and programs that would best meet the needs and goals of the target community. Examples of strategies and programs could include such ideas as home and school tutoring, family literacy programs, ESL, self-help programs, leadership and advocacy training, and so forth.

Step 4: Developing a proposal and seeking funding. Writers in the HSCSC produce a clear, concise, and well-documented proposal that includes sections describing (a) the need for the program, (b) goals and objectives, (c) a description of how the program will be operated, (d) personnel needs, (e) timelines for program implementation, (f) evaluation of the effectiveness of the program, and (g) a budget.

HSCSC members then take the proposal to community businesses and local corporations—banks, grocery chains, and oil companies are good examples—with a request for help in funding the program. Getting this kind of program ownership by a community business or agency ensures local support and visibility. Funding should be matched at least minimally by the school in the promise of volunteers and use of facilities.

Step 5: Recruiting personnel and participants. Once funds are obtained, personnel are selected, and program plans are drawn, program participants can be recruited through personal contact, "word of mouth," local media, bilingual flyers sent home with the children, or posters in community meeting places.

Step 6: Implementing the program. Implementation follows the

plans described in the funding proposal with special attention to monitoring activities with respect to program goals and objectives.

Step 7: Evaluating progress and outcomes. A well-written proposal will have both clearly defined goals and objectives, and clearly defined measures of the program's success in meeting those goals and objectives. Participant feedback is regularly collected and evaluated, and the program is refined based on this feedback. Monitoring implementation increases the program's effectiveness and helps with securing future funding for the program.

Step 8: Institutionalizing the program. Finally, the school district must draw plans to institutionalize the program to protect its long-term impact on serving parents and on increasing the students' academic achievement. Once the program is institutionalized, the HSCC continues to ensure its relevance by refocusing objectives when necessary.

Now we will take a look at a case study in which this planning process was used.

The Parent Resource Center: An Experiment in Collaboration

Parent resource centers provide a clear signal to parents that they are not only welcome as *visitors* in the schools but also as *participants* by providing a special place for them to share, learn, and get involved (Johnson, 1993). Bermúdez and Márquez (1993) helped develop one such parent resource center (PRC) for Ashbel Smith Elementary School in Baytown, Texas, a predominantly Hispanic area (see "Two Success Stories," pages 60-61). A great percentage of the children are on free lunch programs and most homes communicate in Spanish. When offered the opportunity to participate in the school program, parents responded with enthusiasm and appreciation for the opportunity.

The PRC is funded by a local bank through the University of Houston-Clear Lake, representing a four-way partnership model of school, community, homes, and the university working in collaboration. The goal of the PRC is to meet the needs of language-minority parents and their community through education, training, and social support.

Based on the results of a needs assessment, the planning committee identified the following needs as parent community priorities: (a) ESL fluency, (b) expertise in the use of strategies to help their children at home, (c) understanding the school system, and (d) un-

derstanding their rights and responsibilities in educating their children.

How the program works. Figure 3 shows the basic configuration of the program, including clearly defined responsibilities of each collaborator group. The university provides training and the framework for curriculum development, program content, and evaluation. The school district approves the program site and schedules, and offers the facilities and janitorial staff needed to keep these facilities open. The school provides the administrative support through its principal and the district's parent involvement coordinator. Local business provides funding and participation of volunteers, and parents provide planning assistance and networking with other parents.

The coordinator scheduled activities based on data collected in the needs assessment study. Using this information has helped minimize conflicts with mothers' and fathers' work schedules and family

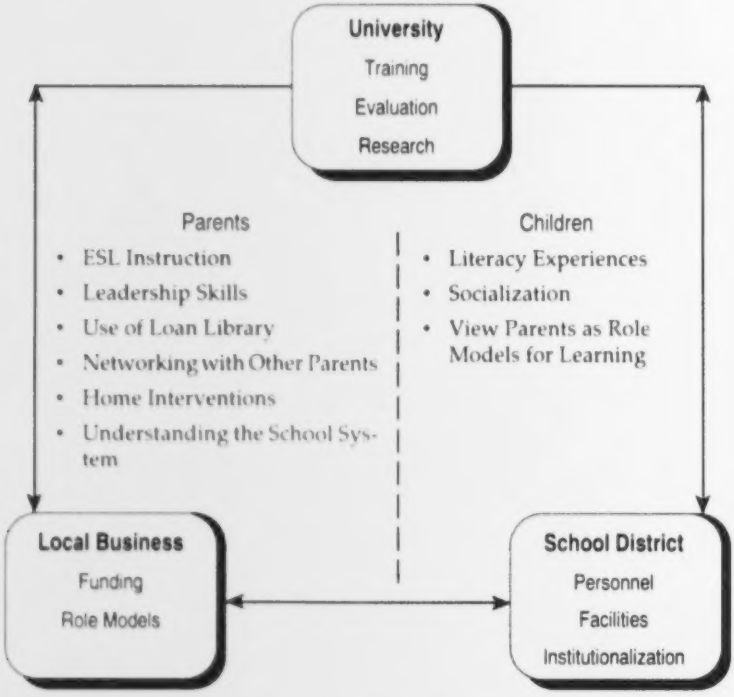

Figure 3. The Parent Resource Center (PRC)

activities. Child care is also factored in: While parents participate in activities, their children are read to and helped with their schoolwork. The temporary site for the program is a local church facility, while the school is being rebuilt due to asbestos contamination.

A total of 35 parents received instruction for 12 weeks in ESL and other topics they chose, including (a) how to become more involved in the schools, (b) how schools should operate, (c) how to talk to school personnel, (d) what schools expect from them as parents, (e) how to help their children at home, and (f) how to improve parenting skills.

Upon completion of the program, a parent recognition evening honored the parents through awards and certificates. This event was attended by a bank executive, the school principal, a district administrator, the trainers, university faculty, parents, and their children.

The results of the program. The first offering of the program was formally evaluated through attendance records and data from a survey administered at the end of the course. Of the 35 students registered, 29 attended regularly, 3 dropped out, and 3 attended at least 50 percent of the classes. This high attendance record was one indicator of success. In addition, the surveys indicated that the majority of the parents had positive feelings toward the program. Their comments included: "Es la mejor oportunidad que tenemos los Latinos" (It is the best opportunity that we, Latins, have); "son muy buenas las clases y nos ayudan a comunicarnos con otras personas en inglés" (The classes are very good, and they help us communicate with others in English); and "las clases son importantes y útiles para ayudar a los niños en la escuela" (The classes are important and useful to help our children in school). Parents have demonstrated their leadership by drafting a letter to the school board requesting a hearing to offer their suggestions, concerns, and requirements for the new school. In addition, they have started a petition for new equipment and resources and challenged each other in seeking the most signatures. Thus, they have not only learned English, but they have also gained an awareness of how schools function and an understanding of the most effective role parents can play in enhancing their children's career aspirations.

Most parents had a self-improvement goal for taking the classes. It ranged from becoming competent enough to help their children with homework to being able to pursue further studies or attain employment. When asked what they would change about the pro-

gram, there was unanimity in requesting more instructional days per week ("me gustaría que fueran más días a la semana"). In general, the questionnaires indicated that parents were motivated to better themselves and to become a part of society ("para poder integrarme a la sociedad de aquí"), including becoming active participants in their children's learning ("para ayudar a mis hijos").

Plans for the future include expanding the program to other school sites through funds provided by other local business and industry sources and rethinking the child-care program to include systematic and sequenced learning experiences that support schoolwork.

Highlights of Chapter 6

The purpose of this chapter was to describe various home-school-community programs and provide examples of models for creating

Two Success Stories

María Angela and Laura are not their real names, but they represent two of the many parents whose aspirations have been enhanced by this educational program.

María Angela. María Angela is in her early 30s, and the mother of two boys (fourth grade and prekindergarten). She is a beginning ESL student who has encountered tremendous difficulty learning English in spite of her enthusiasm and motivation. María Angela has an impeccable record of class attendance, which she supplements by viewing English language programs offered through the local educational television channel. The following is a translated excerpt of an interview with her:

> Learning English helps us overcome the obstacles we encounter in this country. It gives us the opportunity to go to a doctor without having to find an interpreter. This year, I believe we all have learned a little bit of English; although it is difficult to learn it. It is so important that I do not wish to be absent from any of our classes, even though sometimes I must. Look, my children are growing, I need to learn to help my children with their schoolwork. Although I only completed nine years of school in my country [Guatemala], one day I want to go back to school so I can obtain a job. This is my dream. We are very appreciative of all that the program has done for us. We are in this country and we need to communicate with others in their language.

This excerpt dispels several negative stereotypes regarding parents. It shows an interested parent who values the language of the country and

them at the local level. The discussion included the following summary points:

- Developing organizational structures that encourage community ownership, parental involvement, and comprehensive and long-lasting programs for parents is the challenge for schools of the 1990s. Communities have a responsibility to keep their children in school and educate them.
- Basic goals of home-school-community undertakings should focus on encouraging students to (a) stay in school, (b) improve their self-concepts, (c) expand their career expectations, and (d) broaden their career opportunities.
- Grassroots efforts rather than top-down policies and projects work best for improving outcomes for language-minority students. Community-based projects can involve collaboration between the

who is motivated to work hard to become a productive member of society by helping her children learn and by seeking future employment.

Laura. Laura is in her late 20s. She taught second grade in Mexico for one year before her family moved to Texas for financial reasons. Because she does not speak English she cannot obtain employment in a bilingual classroom. Laura has three children: a boy in the third grade, a girl in prekindergarten, and a two-year-old boy at home. She joined the PRC English classes and has also demonstrated her desire to improve her future and that of her family. The following is a translated explanation of why she wants to learn English:

> I want to learn English to be able to teach in this country, as soon as all my children are grown and attend school. I am a certified teacher in my own country but my dream is to learn enough English to attend the university here and become certified to teach in a bilingual classroom. My most important priority now is my children but learning English is also an important responsibility that I must pursue.

Laura appreciates her important role as an involved parent and is willing to expand her horizons and learn the language that will allow her to pursue higher studies.

There could be no more effective intervention to involve these two and other hard-to-reach parents than offering ESL classes at convenient and flexible times so both fathers and mothers can profit from the opportunity. In the process, schools will also benefit from a well-educated parent constituency who can better help children at home, participate at school, and make progress toward a better future.

schools and various other groups, including parent groups; local governments; charitable organizations, churches, and neighborhood centers; and local business and industry.

- Parent resource centers provide a clear signal to parents that they are welcome not only as visitors in the schools but also as participants by providing a special place for them to share, learn, and get involved (Johnson, 1993).
- In the parent resource center (PRC) developed with the help of Bermúdez and Márquez (1993) of the University of Houston-Clear Lake, there are clearly defined responsibilities for each collaborator group. The university provides training and the framework for curriculum development, program content, and evaluation. The school district approves the program site and schedules, and offers the facilities and janitorial staff needed to keep these facilities open. The school provides the administrative support through its principal and the district's parent involvement coordinator. Local business provides funding and participation of volunteers, and parents provide planning assistance and networking with other parents.

CHAPTER 7

Future Directions in Parent Involvement

> Where do we go from here? It is clear that pressing concerns remain and that there are actions needed at every level of involvement.

Seeley (1993) argues that we must move away from the "delegation model" (i.e., schools educate and homes nurture) to a collaborative model in which all parties involved are empowered in "ways that promise higher levels of social and academic achievement" (p. 233). To do this, schools will need to recognize the pluralistic nature of their communities. According to Banks (1993), the first step is to recognize that the schools are social systems that include parents, communities, and school professionals reinforcing each other's efforts to keep students in schools.

> To implement multicultural education in a school, we must reform its power relationships, the verbal interaction between teachers and students, the culture of the school, the curriculum, extracurricular activities, attitudes toward minority languages, the testing program, and grouping practices. The institutional norms, social structures, cause-belief statements, values, and goals of the school must be transformed and reconstructed. (p. 22)

Parental involvement has been acknowledged as a prerequisite for school success by those involved in education at all levels. So too, solutions must be found at each of these levels before the full potential of Hispanic parent involvement in education is realized. This chapter will recommend actions that could move education forward within the following areas of influence: classrooms, schools and school districts, institutions of higher education, and state and federal government.

Actions in Classrooms

Involve parents in middle and high school education. High school student achievement and aspirations show increases when

parents are involved (McDill, Rigsby, & Meyers, 1969). Yet, parent involvement continues to be slight past elementary school. Studies have shown that parents' confidence diminishes regarding their ability to home tutor as their children reach higher grades. Additionally, parent involvement opportunities at middle and high schools occur less frequently and are of lower quality according to parents, and teachers offer little guidance to parents for helping their children at home (Dauber & Epstein, 1993).

Actions in Schools and Districts

Form partnerships with parents to overcome cultural differences. Two important social forces can undercut the success of Hispanic students. First, as often happens in families that have recently immigrated into a new culture, the younger generation assimilates quickly—due largely to the influence of peers—growing away from their parents' generation culturally. Second, in the past couple of decades, schools have become larger and more departmentalized, making them increasingly remote from students, parents, and the communities they serve. This combination of societal forces has left many youth without the steady and guiding influence of adults working together from within their communities and schools. In this situation, special efforts must be made to form partnerships with the home, even though cultural differences may make these partnerships difficult to attain.

It has been extensively documented for many years that the more systematic, comprehensive, and long-lasting the involvement of parents in schooling, the more positive results are obtained in terms of school effectiveness (Gordon, 1978). Given the potential of parent involvement to improve dropout rates, it follows that principals and district administrators will see the wisdom in taking action to ensure parental programs at all levels.

Involve parents in decision making. School administrators must expand their narrow vision of parental involvement to include a parental voice in decision making. While Hispanic parents are highly interested in becoming involved in advocacy and decision making, actual participation in these activities is low (Chavkin & Williams, 1993). Earlier research by Chavkin and Williams (1987) indicated that superintendents and board presidents disagreed that having parents involved directly in decision making, or offering training to teachers and parents to strengthen their dialogue, were useful or

important strategies for schools in fulfilling their educational responsibilities. These authors conclude that "administrators need to collaborate with parents to develop a clear statement about the goals of parent involvement in the schools. The statement needs to be based on the premise that parents are as important to children's academic success as are educators" (p. 181).

Develop expertise in parents for school decision making. Chavkin and Williams (1987, 1993) also report that Hispanic parents expressed a desire for additional guidance, information, and activities to help them become more deeply involved in their children's schooling. This request should be interpreted as a call for action on the part of the schools. Increases in site-based school management nationwide have created the need for more extensive training for parents and school personnel. Today, committees representing the interests of the school, the community, and the parents make vital school decisions. To develop "balanced authority relationships" (Taylor & Levine, 1991, p. 396) and higher level decision making, committee members must become competent in their individual roles in self-governance. Understanding the system and being aware of findings from the extensive research in effective schools is a requirement for effective decentralized planning. Parental empowerment means accessing and applying information needed to become an informed voice in the committee. Time, technical assistance, and training must also be provided to school personnel so that their participation in the decision making is not a mockery (Firestone & Corbett, 1988).

Institutionalize parent involvement (i.e., build it into the budget). From the research conducted by this author, it seems that systematic and systemic efforts have not been made to incorporate parental involvement within the infrastructure of schools. Many effective program models are dependent upon external funding, which increases their vulnerability to remain active once funds cease. Institutionalization of these programs requires a deep commitment to parental involvement on the part of the school system; few schools in the nation have shown that this commitment is a top priority in fund reallocation (Nardine & Morris, 1991).

Find out what parents need and keep them involved. Many parent involvement programs have had success in recruiting hard-to-reach parents through open houses, home visits, parent-teacher conferences, and so forth. Few have had structures in place to keep parents involved over the long haul. As Henderson (1988) points

out, parental involvement is not a "quick fix or a luxury" (p. 148). Maintaining higher levels of parental involvement must be viewed as an integral part of the continuous effort to educate children, particularly students from culturally and linguistically diverse homes. Parents need opportunities for all kinds of involvement, including options that range from low to high levels of commitment.

Considering the general failure of top-down program planning in targeting community needs, it is time for schools to begin welcoming grassroots community input. Developing programs that reflect parents' interests—ones in which parents will participate—depends on planning grounded in community needs. Information collected in a community needs assessment can provide direction for the scope and nature of parent involvement programs.

Improve communication with parents. Improving communication between schools and non-English-speaking homes is an additional obligation of the schools. Administrators can make a difference in the type of information that goes home to parents and the format of such communications. Impersonal notes written in English have proven nonproductive in engaging Hispanic LEP parents' interest in school participation. Providing release time for teachers to personally contact parents or hiring parent advocates to communicate information and coordinate activities may be necessary for an effective home-school communication model. Epstein (1987) adds, "If administrators understand the importance of parent-teacher and parent-child interactions, they may be able to influence teachers to continue to communicate through the high school years" (p. 130). Among the functions that she identifies as supporting teachers in this endeavor, the following are included: (a) coordinating activities districtwide, (b) supporting training and research dissemination activities, (c) funding involvement programs for parents, and (d) recognizing teachers and parents who work together. Additionally, establishing a two-way communication system provides genuine opportunities for parental input in school matters.

Link with community services. Support programs and resources for LEP parents have to be in place to succeed in engaging these parents. Simich-Dudgeon (1993) states, "Since a good number of language-minority LEP parents have serious problems adjusting to life in this country, schools should be able to provide information and referral to the parents regarding agencies that may be able to assist them in such areas of concern as health care, housing, and jobs"

(p. 196). Hiring translators or securing volunteer interpreters would ensure greater school access for parents and enhance the parent-teacher dialogue.

Provide ESL classes. ESL classes can be made available to these parents through the school or a home-school-community partnership (e.g., church or local business). LEP parents, for example, have identified the learning of English as a top priority interest area (Padrón & Bermúdez, 1986). Schools should respond to this call for help and take the initiative of offering ESL courses for parents as an incentive to achieve their school participation. As Inger (1992) concluded, it is vital to match the type of program or services offered by the school to the needs of the parents to facilitate their continued involvement.

Actions in Higher Education

Preservice and inservice training. Institutions of higher education must include clinical and research-oriented courses in how to deal with parents, particularly minority parents, in their teacher preparation curriculum. Teachers reach the schools with preconceived negative attitudes about parents' degree of interest and competence in assisting with their children's learning. Training has been shown to improve teachers' degree of comfort in working with minority parents and to raise their regard for parental involvement in education (Bermúdez & Padrón, 1988; Palestis, 1993). Therefore, it is likely that expanding staff development will have an impact in these areas.

Conduct research. Research has shown the immediate overall positive effects of parental involvement in education (see e.g., Henderson, 1989). Planners and trainers, however, need more research knowledge—including summative and formative evaluation data—about the effects of home-school partnerships in arresting academic failure and the long-term effects of parental involvement.

Actions in State and Federal Government

Fund school district parent involvement initiatives. By increasing funding levels, state legislatures can help school districts make their parent involvement initiatives a permanent part of their infrastructures. After reviewing their data, Nardine and Morris (1991) conclude that "with regard to parent involvement, state leadership and the assignment of staff members have reflected only minimal

support. State education agencies still offer little financial support for staff and programs" (p. 366).

Support parent involvement at secondary level. In secondary schools, providing funds to support parent programs usually means cutting from other services because most federal, state, and local funding is targeted to the primary grades (see e.g., Chapter I, Title VII, Head Start, Follow Through, and other federal programs). Some states have taken initiatives to expand parent involvement programs through the high school years (e.g., California, Illinois, and Missouri), but these efforts are sporadic and entirely dependent on the school administration's commitment to make the home a priority in learning. For the most part: "Insufficient and inappropriate expenditures and allocations of staff characterize many states' efforts, and the programs in most states lack coherence" (Epstein, 1991, p. 347).

Provide accountability, training, informational, and evaluation support. A nationwide study conducted by Nardine, Chapman, and Moles (1989) has shown that only nine states devote one or more fulltime equivalent (FTE) staff member per 100,000 students to coordinate parent involvement (i.e., Hawaii, Montana, Nebraska, New Hampshire, Nevada, Oregon, Rhode Island, South Dakota, and Vermont). Activities essential to program growth and development have been identified: (a) standards for teacher inservice training to deal with parents, (b) development of materials for teachers to distribute to parents, (c) coordination of material and activity development for parent programs, and (d) evaluation of program initiatives. However, these activities are not prevalent nationwide (Nardine & Morris, 1991). These researchers conclude that the states' lack of commitment can be detected in the superficiality of the legislation that addresses parent involvement issues. They make this call for action: "If we believe that parents can make an invaluable, sustained contribution to their children's education, then the educational leaders of our states need to give parent involvement a much higher priority" (Nardine & Morris, 1991, p. 366).

Highlights of Chapter 7

The purpose of this chapter was to suggest future research and practice directions. The discussion noted that to improve parent involvement in the education of Hispanic children, action is needed within every area of influence.

Actions needed in classrooms:

- involving parents in middle and high school education.

Actions needed in schools and districts:

- forming partnerships with parents to overcome cultural differences;
- involving parents in decision making;
- developing expertise in parents for school decision making;
- institutionalizing parent involvement (i.e., building it into the budget);
- finding out what parents need and keeping them involved;
- improving communication with parents;
- linking with community services; and
- providing ESL classes.

Actions needed in higher education:

- improving preservice and inservice training, and
- conducting research.

Actions needed in state and federal government:

- funding school district parent involvement initiatives;
- supporting parent involvement at the secondary level; and
- providing accountability, training, information, and evaluation support.

Appendix

Parent Education Teacher Training Model

An example of a comprehensive inservice program for teachers that includes parental training and research is reported by Bermúdez and Padrón (1987a, 1988, 1989, 1990) and by Bermúdez & Rakow (1992). The program represents a university-school district collaborative program developed to integrate parent and teacher education in the inservice teacher training curriculum. The model includes both clinical and research experiences for teachers who will be dealing with language-minority parents.

Clinical Dimension of the Program

The clinical teacher training dimension consists of a three-credit-hour graduate course encompassing three phases: (a) on-campus training for the inservice teachers in ESL methodology and in issues related to parental involvement, (b) supervised on-site ESL and parental involvement instruction to adults whose children attend the surrounding area schools, and (c) on-campus debriefing for the inservice teachers to discuss and evaluate the field experience (see Figure 4).

Graduate students spend four weeks on campus preparing lessons, reviewing methods and strategies to teach adult ESL literacy, and rehearsing lessons to be taught to the parents. They also devote time to planning the parent recruitment strategies with the corresponding school districts. Once ready for the field experience, teachers, grouped in teams of four, spend nine weeks teaching parents who have enrolled in the program. Classes meet twice a week for a period of three hours per session. Breaks are held at a minimum, upon the insistence of the parent participants. After completion of this portion of the course, the graduate students return to campus for an additional two weeks to evaluate the experience, analyze their field notes, and finish their course project requirements.

In order to maintain uniformity in the instruction of parents, a manual has been designed to be used as a curriculum guide (Bermúdez & Padrón, 1987b). To determine the nature and extent of their needs,

researchers surveyed parents from the surrounding area. Survey results guided the choice of topics for the parent classes (see Table 2 for a list of topics covered in the training).

At the end of the course, preservice and inservice teachers who have participated in the training are able to (a) prepare and deliver effective lessons in ESL, (b) plan and deliver effective lessons in crucial issues related to parental involvement at home and in the schools, (c) prepare adequate field notes of observations during the field experience, (d) understand the rationale for parental involvement programs, (e) evaluate the usefulness of instructional materials for use in parental involvement programs, (f) work effectively in a team-teaching context, and (g) revise the curriculum guide to incorporate information gained through the field experience.

To measure the program's impact on parents, a survey was designed to evaluate their knowledge of and attitudes toward the home-school partnership. Areas examined included (a) knowledge of and attitudes toward the various instructional programs available in the school, including bilingual education, ESL, special education, and gifted and talented programs; (b) attitudes toward their own participation in school (e.g., being active in school events, their degree of support in the child's academic activities, communicating

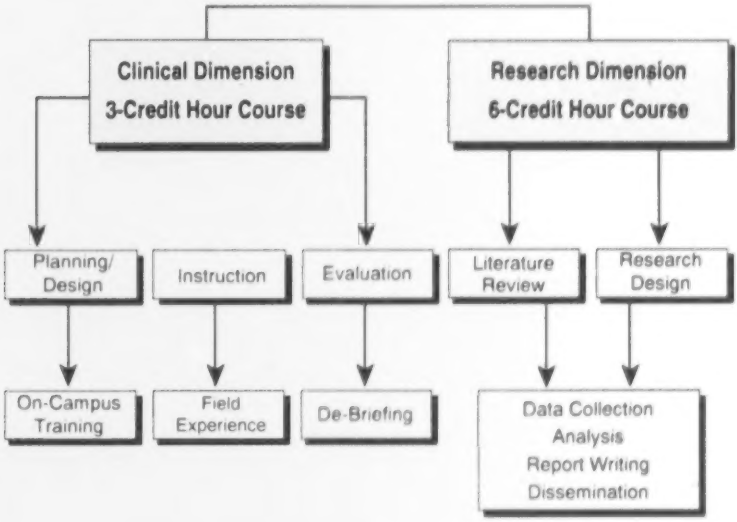

Figure 4. Parent Education Teacher Training Model

Table 2. Developing Family Literacy:
A List of Topics for Non-English-Speaking Parents

PART I. ENGLISH FOR SURVIVAL

Introduction

1. Greeting and Salutations
2. Making Friends
3. Getting Along in School
4. A Visit to the Bank
5. Learning Each Other's Names
6. Going Shopping
7. Learning to Say "No"
8. A Visit to the Doctor
9. Buying a Car
10. Filling Out Application Forms

PART II. TOPICS FOR PARENT EDUCATION PROGRAMS (English Version)

Introduction

1. Understanding the Educational System
2. School Programs
3. Parents as the Child's First Teacher
4. Parents Working with Teachers
5. A Trip to the Library
6. Recreational Activities
7. Parents Helping Their Children with Their Study Habits
8. Stages of Cognitive Development
9. Drug Education

PART II: TEMAS PARA PROGRAMAS EDUCATIVOS PARA PADRES DE FAMILIA (Spanish Version)

Introducción

1. Funcionamiento del Sistema Educativo en los Estados Unidos
2. Programas Escolares
3. Los Padres: Primeros Maestros del Niño
4. Cómo Colaborar con los Maestros
5. Un Viaje a la Biblioteca
6. Actividades Recreativas
7. Ayudando a Adquirir Buenos Hábitos de Estudio
8. Etapas del Desarrollo Cognitivo del Niño
9. El Peligro de las Drogas

with other parents, and awareness of community and legal resources); and (c) understanding of parental duties and responsibilities in the education of their children (i.e., familiarization with issues related to the parents' role in the development of their children's self-esteem, awareness of when and how to help their child with schoolwork, and cognizance of whose responsibility it is to educate the child).

Results from this evaluation phase suggest that exposure to the training increased the parents' positive attitudes toward home-school partnerships as well as their participation in school matters. Specifically, these results indicated that parents showed statistically significant gains in awareness in the following areas: (a) the school's instructional program, (b) their responsibilities in the children's schooling, and (c) the need to increase their participation in school activities (Bermúdez & Padrón, 1987a).

The second evaluation phase targeted 20 inservice teacher trainees. Their attitudinal changes were measured by examining their field notes taken throughout the duration of the project. Comments included their observations, feelings, and opinions regarding their experience instructing parents. Analysis of these data indicated that 80 percent of the participating inservice teachers had a positive change of attitude towards minority parents. The 10 percent who already had positive attitudes stated that this experience increased their sensitivity toward the needs of the parents. No change in attitude was found for the remaining 10 percent. Additionally, teachers outlined the following strengths of the program: (a) providing teachers and parents with an opportunity to understand each other in a supportive environment, (b) addressing the basic needs of parents, and (c) helping parents understand their role in the education of their children. Furthermore, the teachers learned that most parents are extremely supportive of the educational system, but feel isolated due to the lack of English skills. Comments from the trainees revealed knowledge and attitudes acquired as a result of this experience:

> "I learned that parents of LEP children are like any other parents."
>
> "I felt such a satisfying exhilaration every time we left."
>
> "The program has been the most enriching learning experience that I've ever had."
>
> "I was unprepared for their enthusiasm, their willingness to work hard, and their generally high level of motivation to learn."

In summary, these field notes seemed to indicate that teachers improved (a) their knowledge about parents' needs, (b) their general attitudes about parents, and (c) their ability to communicate with parents (Bermúdez & Padrón, 1988).

Phase three of the evaluation cycle concentrated on the school achievement of the preschool and elementary school children of parent participants over a period of six weeks. Forty-six preschool students, ages four-six, whose parents were in the program, showed a significant increase in achievement in reading and language arts over those children whose parents did not participate. In like manner, 84 elementary school children of parent participants showed a significant improvement in reading over the 78 children whose parents were not program participants (Bermúdez and Padrón, 1989, 1990). Table 3 summarizes the three-year research findings. These findings corroborate previous research that has noted the critical role of parents in the area of language skills development.

Successful Features of the Parent Education Component of the Program

Some of the features that contributed to the success of this program included (a) flexible scheduling of classes to engage both fathers and mothers; (b) research-based framework for activities, class-

Table 3. Summary of Parent Education Teacher Training Model Research Findings

Parents showed gains in:
(Bermúdez & Padrón, 1987a)
- Attitudes towards school
- Participation in school activities
- Perception of parental responsibilities regarding children's schooling

Teachers improved:
(Bermúdez & Padrón, 1988)
- Knowledge about parents' needs
- Attitudes about parents
- Ability to communicate with parents

Students increased:
(Bermúdez & Padrón, 1989, 1990)
- Achievement in reading
- Achievement in language arts

room methodology, and content; (c) collaborative efforts among the school districts, the community, and the university; (d) teaming among inservice teachers to provide variety in the instruction of parents; (e) field-based instruction; and (f) use of a standardized curriculum guide developed in collaboration between university faculty and school practitioners.

In addition, the program parameters were determined by the data collected through the needs assessment, which described the particular characteristics and needs of the parent community targeted. These data included parents' needs, aspirations, and present status. A comprehensive examination of how to carry out surveys and how to summarize survey data appears in a recent report by Epstein, Connors, and Clark-Salinas (1993). The first section of the report offers questionnaires for teachers, parents, and students.

The overriding goal in planning the curriculum was to reduce the alienation of parents so that they could become supportive of school efforts and proactive in the decision-making process.

Research Dimension of the Program

The research dimension of the teacher training model consisted of a six-semester-hour projects course for inservice teachers completing their research requirement for a master's degree in multicultural studies under the sponsorship of Title VII of the Secondary and Elementary Education Act (Bermúdez & Rakow, 1993). The course exposed the students to qualitative and quantitative research methodology and assisted them in designing a parent-focused research design (refer again to Figure 4, p. 86). The product of their efforts was published as a collection of research summaries by the Research Center for Language and Culture at the University of Houston-Clear Lake (Ensle, Bermúdez, & Rakow, 1992). The research conducted by the students identified the following needs of LEP parents to be addressed by schools:

- developing family literacy programs, including ESL;
- removing the barriers that keep parents from reaching the schools;
- maintaining effective communication in the parents' native language, including one-on-one continuous personal communication;
- adequately assessing LEP student needs and goals;

- providing training and guidance of the LEP parents leading to involvement, decision making, and governance;
- making the LEP parent feel important, comfortable, and welcome in the schools their children attend; and
- sharing with the LEP parents the school goals, expectations, and opportunities available to their children (Ensle, Bermúdez, & Rakow, 1992, p. 4).

These critical parent involvement issues, when integrated into preservice and inservice programs, provide opportunities to develop sensitivity to and understanding of the important role that language-minority parents play in the education of their children. In addition, as teachers come into direct contact with parents, some of the enigma surrounding the home is replaced with a more objective perception of the home environment (Bermúdez & Padrón, 1988). Direct training of school staff, particularly teachers, ensures a climate of comfort and acceptance of minority parents as resourceful partners in the educational mission of the schools (Palestis, 1993).

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